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THE LORD OF LOVE

THE LORD OF LOVE

THIRTY MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

BY

KARL TIEDEMANN, M.A.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE

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TO ALL THE FAITHFUL, LIVING AND DEPARTED

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ESPECIALLY

FREDERICK SPRATT

AND

GEORGE MIDDLETON

PREFACE

WE live in days of keen and universal criticism. Scholarship has subjected the Holy Scriptures to a criticism more penetrating than that received by any other writings. The young criticize their parents very freely. The Christian moral law, the sayings of our Blessed Lord, and even His own life have not escaped. There is a criticism which is reverent and reasonable. There is much to-day which is neither. We may therefore the more heartily welcome a book the purpose of which is to recall us from criticism to devotion to God Who has revealed Himself to us through His Eternal and Incarnate Son, our Lord and God Jesus Christ.

As an introduction to the practice of meditation this book is simple, clear, thorough, and attractive. It will serve also to help us to acquire (what we all so urgently need) the habit of the *devotional* reading of the sacred Scriptures.

It is a book which we may well hope will be read not only by Catholics but also by pious Evangelicals. Recent controversy, especially in Parliament and in the secular press, has demonstrated unmistakably the entire misunderstanding of the so-called Anglo-Catholic movement which widely prevails. This book will, I hope, make it clear that its root is not elaborate ceremonial, nor a reliance on magic, nor disloyalty to our own English provinces, but a real devotion to the Person of our Blessed Lord, and a consequent veneration for His Mother and those who have come closest to Him. We desire to know Him in order that we may love Him.

The book—necessarily if it is to serve its purpose—sets a very high ideal—and this is pressed upon us by some striking utterances :—

'Self-will can never give power.'

'Tear into smallest pieces any itinerary for the journey (of faith) which your imagination may have drawn up. . . . He chooses for you a way that you know not, "that you may be compelled into a thousand intercourses with Himself."'

'Jesus did not come to enact a new set of rules ; He came to offer you a life of fellowship with Himself, and in that union to bestow comfort, peace, purity, and power.'

Of S. Mary Magdalene the author writes : 'She had no problems. She simply loved.'

These, taken almost at random, will serve as examples. We meet with thoughts now terrifying, now inspiring ; surprising and warning ; humbling and invigorating. We are urged to practise, and practice is the only path to progress. 'God is pure activity. Love must act. Your meditations must lead you to a life of action, to an energized life, to improved conduct, to a change of heart and will' (p. 180).

Here we find beautiful pictures of the Saviour of the world, of the spotless Mother, of the humble foster-father, of the Holy Family, and these both can and do inspire.

I pray most earnestly that God may bless these meditations to many souls, and both sweeten and strengthen the days of their earthly pilgrimage, that *learning* here, they may hereafter *know*, 'even as they are known.'

✠ F. GOLDSMITH.

January, 1929.

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ON MEDITATION

BOOKS of meditation usually take the form of a dull spiritual essay or, to pass to the other extreme, a vague theological outline. Both types are of little value to the beginner. This volume is offered with the desire to strike a happy medium between these extremes, to teach a method of meditation, and to present it as an interesting spiritual exercise.

The form used is a simplification of the Ignatian method. For your convenience this form is presented here in outline, with comments and suggestions.

The Ignatian Method

I. The Preparation.

(*a*) The remote preparation consists in your being in a state of grace ; that is, without grievous sin on your soul, and of your having a serious intention to persevere as a good Christian

(*b*) The proximate preparation consists in preparing the material for meditation overnight and in recalling it on awaking in the morning.

II. The Preludes.

(*a*) The opening devotions, the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and such other acts as may be suggested at the time.

(*b*) The sketching of the mental picture of the subject of the meditation. If you are tempted to distraction, it is helpful to recall this picture.

(*c*) There is sometimes added a prayer for a special

blessing, a direct petition for that Fruit of which you have made note in the proximate preparation.

III. The Body of the Meditation consists in the use of :

(*a*) The Memory.

This is a developed form of the mental picture. It is often helpful to ask these following seven questions ; Who ? What ? Where ? With what means ? Why ? How ? When ? But do not use these questions slavishly or linger over them if they do not seem to be of assistance. Let the Holy Spirit carry your devotion where He wills.

(*b*) The Understanding.

In this part of the meditation you apply the subject to yourself, weighing your motives, examining past and present conduct, thinking of your future actions, and drawing conclusions.

(*c*) The Will.

Here you offer our Lord acts of devotion and your resolutions. Both of these are of very great importance.

IV. The Conclusion of the Meditation, in which you offer your resolutions to God.

It should be carefully noted that, although the three functions, the memory, the understanding, and the will, have been mentioned in order, in practice you will find them merging into one another. And as you advance in your meditations, you will very likely find that the memory and understanding occupy less time and that more attention is paid to the acts of devotion and your resolutions. This is as it should be.

The acts of devotion may come at various stages of your mental prayer and are never out of place. In fact the more time they occupy the better. Many acts have been indicated in the following pages. They have been

taken for the most part from a very admirable collection entitled *Ascensiones in Corde*.[1] But they are intended only as suggestive. Use them freely, recasting them in your own words. These acts are of the greatest importance in your meditation. They are the very life-pulse of meditation. If you use them for a time as indicated, you will soon learn to add your own. It is not so much the use of the memory and understanding that are important. The value of mental prayer lies in the exercise of your will when you raise your heart to God in acts of love and praise, of contrition and of abandonment, of desire and of union. It is the exercise of your will in the acts of devotion and in the resolutions which give value to your meditation.

The resolutions are of great importance. They should be :

1. Practical. They should not consist in promising vague generalities but in doing certain definite acts. They should be particular and not general.

2. Connected with the probable events of the day. Thus your meditation is carried into your daily life.

3. Made for one day only, though they may be often repeated on following days.

4. Put into action at the first possible opportunity.

5. Made humbly and with due regard for your weakness. To make a rash resolution would be to increase your pride.

It remains to offer some further practical suggestions.

The best time for your meditation is in the morning. Your mind is fresh and the affairs of the day have not intruded themselves. To make your meditation in the

[1] *Ascensiones in Corde*. A Collection of Aspirations and Ejaculations. With a preface by Rev. P. N. Waggett, S.S.J.E. (A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd.)

morning may involve rearranging other duties ; it may mean rising earlier, but it is worth the sacrifice. If the morning is impossible, your meditation can be made at another time. For some the late evening, when quiet is secured, may be more desirable.

Study, Bible reading, devotional reading are valuable helps to the spiritual life, but they are not the equivalent of meditation.

Meditation should not be used as a means to another end. The priest especially is to be warned not to use his meditation time as a preparation for his next sermon. Meditation is not study, and prayer must be made with an undivided attention.

A word of encouragement to those who suffer from distractions or from dryness. Distraction, of course, is a temptation not peculiar to meditation. It besets all prayer. The remedy lies in not being distressed at distractions when they come. Do not waste more time over distractions, but quietly and firmly bring your attention back to your prayer. To be troubled unduly over distractions is merely another form of pride.

Be patient, too, about seemingly fruitless meditations. The value of prayer does not lie in the pleasure it gives you. The meditation which entails the hard work of continually bringing back wandering thoughts, which forces the will to frequent acts of faith and of resignation to the divine will, is often of far greater spiritual value than the prayer which has been easy and sweet. The former contains less of self and self-pleasing than does the latter, and so is of greater value in the discipline of the self and the abandonment of the soul to God. The value of prayer does not consist in its ease or pleasantness but in the offering of the will to God, so that the soul may advance steadily in the knowledge and love and service of the Lord of Love.

Prayers before Meditation

Veni Creator.

COME, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire,
And lighten with celestial fire.
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost Thy sevenfold gifts impart.

Thy blessed unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love.
Enable with perpetual light
The dullness of our blinded sight.

Anoint and cheer our soiled face
With the abundance of Thy grace.
Keep far our foes, give peace at home ;
Where Thou art guide, no ill can come.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee, of both, to be but One ;
That, through the ages all along,
This may be our endless song :
Praise to Thy eternal merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

OUR Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation ; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

HAIL Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Anima Christi.

SOUL of Christ, sanctify me,
Body of Christ, save me,
Blood of Christ, refresh me,
Water from the side of Christ, wash me,
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesu, hear me,
Within Thy wounds hide me,
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee,
From the malicious enemy defend me,
In the hour of my death call me
And bid me come to Thee,
That with Thy saints I may praise Thee
For ever and ever. Amen

THE LORD OF LOVE

I

THE CONCEPTION OF S. JOHN BAPTIST

Read S. Luke i. 5–25.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

BE very quiet and listen for the voice of God. He has a message for you, perhaps of encouragement, perhaps of comfort, or of rebuke. Whatever the word be, it is part of His love for you. Listen for it. Say the *Veni Creator* and the *Our Father*.

I

Next, picture the scene in the Temple. Imagine that it is the hour of the Morning Sacrifice. Try to see in your mind the massive gates. Watch them slowly swing open on their huge hinges. Hear the blast of the silver trumpets, calling the people of God to worship. Join with them in an act of worship. Say very slowly the *Sanctus*, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord

God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High. Amen.'

See the Levites and those whose course it is, hastening to worship. Among them is the venerable figure of Zacharias, of the course of Abia. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron and her name is Elisabeth. They are both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. They have no child because that Elisabeth is barren and they are both now well stricken in years. Can it be also said of you that you walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless ? What is it that God is asking you to do to-day ? Tell God that you want to do His blessed will. Say three times, ' Thy will be done, O God.'

II

Watch the movements of Zacharias. For the first time in his life the lot has fallen on him to burn the incense. This was the most solemn part of the worship and so exalted an act that only once in a lifetime might a priest have that privilege. The old man is intent upon his act of worship. How careful he is in the service of God. Are you careful in your preparations for Holy Communion ? Resolve that the next time you receive the Bread of Life you will be more careful in your preparation. Say the *Anima Christi*.

Follow carefully in your mind the service in the Temple. See Zacharias with the golden censer standing alone. The Holy Place is lit by the seven-branched candlestick. Before him is the golden altar of incense, and beyond that hangs the veil before the Holy of Holies. To the right is the table of shewbread, to the left the golden candlestick. Watch the old man as he spreads the incense on the altar. Deep silence falls as the prayers of Israel mount heavenward with the clouds of incense. Do you also for a moment bow down in worship of the Holy One. Say the *Our Father* very slowly.

III

Consider the meaning of worship. Worship is part of your daily life. Do you really understand it? You say your morning and evening prayers, and often during the day you raise your heart to God in acts of brief communion with Him. Then there are the special times when you meet with others to take part in the Church's official act of worship, the offering of the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ. It is from those acts of worship that strength is drawn for daily needs.

What ultimately is meant by worship? Worship is 'worthship,' the rendering of honour to whom honour is due. The essence of worship is the giving of something. In your morning prayers it is yourself that you give. In the Eucharist it is again yourself that you offer in

and through the offering of the Body and Blood of our Lord to the Father in heaven. In every case you must remember that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' Sacrifice is the supreme act of self-surrender and of utter immolation to God. Do you always remember to give yourself? So often people say that they did not get anything out of the Mass. But you go to Mass to give rather than to receive. You must not bargain with God. Resolve, then, to make deeper and more fervent acts of oblation at the Mass. 'Take me and make me wholly Thine.'

IV

After the offering of the incense Zacharias would have withdrawn, but a wonderful sight met his eyes. On the right side of the altar stood an angel. 'And when Zacharias saw him he was troubled and fear fell upon him.' As holy fear came to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the Garden, to the shepherds, to Zacharias and to Joseph, to our Lady herself, so pray that your approach to God may always begin in holy fear. It is the first tribute of the creature to the Creator. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'

V

Then listen to the assuring words of the angel: 'Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard: and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son and thou shalt call his name John. And

thou shalt have joy and gladness ; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord. He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost and many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.'

Do not condemn the aged priest for asking for a sign. The dispensation of the age of faith was just coming. Zacharias was the dumb messenger of that age of faith which is yours. Make an act of faith in the love of God for you. What is it which is troubling you at the present moment ? Do not be afraid. Seek courage from Christ. Make an act of faith in God and submit yourself wholly to His holy will.

' O my God, I believe in Thee and in all Thy love. I submit myself wholly to Thy loving purpose for me. I do not ask to see or understand. I only ask that Thy will be done.'

VI

The people have waited long for Zacharias and marvel that he tarries so long in the Temple. At last he emerges and tries to speak the words of benediction which close the service. But when he cannot speak, they understand that he had seen a vision in the Temple. Wonderingly they disperse to their own homes.

But God fulfilled the message which He spoke through His angel. God always will fulfil His message of love to you if you will but yield yourself to Him. Give Him all your self, your desires and fears, your needs and

wishes. Just what have you kept back from God? Give it to Him. Give your whole self to Him that He may fulfil His loving purpose in you.

Say the *Our Father* and make a definite resolution about trusting God more in some particular problem of your life. Let the resolution be definite, be sure to act on it at the earliest possible moment, and act with joy. Only a slave gives an unwilling service, and our Lord calls you not a servant, but a friend. Act, act quickly, and act joyfully.

II

THE ANNUNCIATION TO THE BLESSED MOTHER

Read S. Luke i. 26–38.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

LISTEN once more for the voice of God. He is always waiting for you to come to Him. Unending is His love. What is it that He has for you to-day? Listen. Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and the *Hail Mary*.

I

It was fitting that the story of God's love should begin in the Temple. Now the scene passes to another sanctuary of love, the home.

Turn your eyes to the home at Nazareth. On the lower slopes of the hills of Galilee stands the little town of Nazareth. It is a scene of peaceful beauty. The town is built on a series of terraces on the hillside. All around grow graceful palms, sweet-scented oranges, silvery olives, beautiful gardens. The town is not withdrawn from the world. Beside it pass the

great caravan routes to Damascus. Here is the home of Mary and Joseph. Pray for a blessing on your home that it may be like that holy house of Nazareth.

Five months after the visit of the angel in the Temple, Gabriel announces to Mary the tidings of the Incarnation. This time the angel comes, not amid the splendour of the Morning Sacrifice in the Temple, but in the lowly home at Nazareth. See the Blessed Virgin kneeling in her humble room. She is pondering the words of Holy Scripture, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.' The angel flashes into her presence. Hear his words: 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee.' Say the Collect for the Annunciation.

'We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts; that, as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His Resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

II

Consider how Mary 'was troubled at his saying.' Her words are not those of troubled doubt but rather of humble inquiry, asking for further guidance as to more deep and willing self-surrender. Listen to the words of the angel as he unfolds further the wonderful message. 'Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb

and shalt bring forth a Son and shalt call His Name Jesus.' Ponder the meaning of the holy Name, Jesus, a Saviour. Ask Him to be your Saviour. Just wherein is your need? From what would you have Him save you? Say many times, 'O Jesus, be to me a Jesus.'

Consider further the humility and self-surrender of Mary as she asks how this is to be. She is willingly submitting herself to what her heart will find hardest to bear. She knew the penalty for adultery. In fancy perhaps she feels the torrent of stones raining upon her. Only dimly could she perceive her cross, only vaguely could she feel the sword piercing her soul. Yet she gave herself wholly and entirely to God to do with as He willed. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.' Give thanks to God for this wonderful act of loving surrender. Say the *Gloria Patri* three times.

III

Consider your life, how full of rebellion it is, so unlike the loving trustfulness of the Blessed Virgin's. Think back over it and try to trace out the course of your rebellion against God. What was your first sin? What next? How much more blessed if you had only surrendered your life as she did. Think of particular acts of rebellion and make a fervent act of contrition.

'Father of Jesus, I have sinned before heaven

and am no longer worthy to be called Thy child. I repent with my whole heart. O give me love for Thee. Let me love much who have sinned much.'

IV

Consider the will of God. Nothing happens which God has not either willed or at least permitted. And God does not will or permit anything which, if used rightly, will not increase His glory and the happiness of mankind. God is glorified by the happiness of His children. If nothing happens but that which God permits, and if He permits or orders nothing but that which will increase your happiness, then all you have to do is to submit yourself to the loving will of God. As long as you keep yourself united to the loving purpose of God, as long as you walk courageously according to His will, and accept lovingly all that He sends you, you have nothing to fear. If you will rely upon God and trust Him in all the details of your life, you will grow in happiness. This reliance upon God does not lessen your obligation to do all that lies in your power to hasten the accomplishment of the purposes of God. But having done all that lies in your power, you are to abandon all else to God. Mary abandoned all to God at the Annunciation. You, too, must make an act of abandonment.

'I give Thee back, O merciful Father, my whole being to be what Thou wilt. To love Thee or not to live at all.'

V

Your abandonment should extend to everything ; to the past, to the present, to the future ; to the body and all its conditions ; to the soul and all its trials ; to life and death, to time and to eternity. Consider your attitude in these matters.

Think of the things which manifestly come directly from God, such as accidents, defects in your life which you are powerless to remedy. In these matters which are from God alone your abandonment cannot be too complete. If it has pleased God to take by death a dear friend or relative, if He has not endowed you with talents, if you are suffering from something which you are powerless to change, these matters must be lovingly accepted. Somewhere, somehow, behind this cross stands a loving God. Then abandon yourself wholly to Him and to His holy will. Say three times, ' Thy will be done.' This loving acceptance of the will of God cannot fail to bless and sanctify you. Consider God's will for you. Thank God, saying the *Gloria Patri.*

VI

Perhaps suffering comes to you through the malice of men. Has some one wronged you ? You must look behind the person who is causing you suffering and see there the malignant figure of the Evil One trying to tear you from your allegiance to God. But look behind Satan

and his minion and you will see the loving face of your God. In permitting this evil He has your happiness in view. Then abandon yourself once more to your loving Father. 'Thy will be done.'

If it be in your power in any way to avert evil and its consequences it is your duty so to do. But be sure not to depart from the principles of abandonment in so doing. Commit the success of your efforts entirely to Him and be ready to accept failure if that be His will. He knows best. You are so often deceived in your opinions. But God is not deceived. He knows what will make for your happiness. Trust Him. Say with Mary, 'Behold the servant of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word.'

If you have sinned or failed, here again is an opportunity for abandonment. You cannot hate sin too much. But you must always carefully distinguish between what is wrong and what is humiliating. Hate sin. Regret wrong done to God or man. But in your own humiliation you may rejoice. Any confusion done to your own self-love and self-esteem is a matter for rejoicing. So will self-love be the more effectually rooted out of your life. Thank God for any humiliation which has come to you and accept it joyfully. Say the *Gloria Patri.*

III

THE VISITATION OF OUR LADY

Read S. Luke i. 39–56.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

KNEEL and say the opening devotions. First pause and recall the presence of God. Some one has said that if you have three minutes in which to pray, you should use two of them for preparation. Make an act of the presence of God. 'Lord, I believe that Thou art here. Draw me more and more to Thee. Let me leave all to find all in Thee, my God and my All.'

1

The next step in a meditation after the opening devotions is to make a picture in your mind of the subject of your prayer. See the Blessed Virgin going in haste to visit her cousin Elisabeth.

Consider first that she goes 'with haste' into the hill country. Her loving heart speeds her steps, perhaps tired with the uphill roads. But at the end of her journey waits a loving and an

understanding heart. So it is that she goes with haste into the hill country.

Do you go with haste into the hill country of your life? Your life is like that of the Blessed Virgin. An angel has announced the will of God to you. Perhaps the external circumstances were different, but you recognize it to be the will of God. Have you risen up with haste to mount the Calvary which is the hill country of your life? If you have not responded with haste, consider that at the end of your journey also there waits a loving and an understanding Heart, the pierced and Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Reflect on the One Who ever waits for you with outstretched arms, and you will want to go with haste to meet Him. Make an act of desire for Jesus.

'Come, Lord Jesus, and dwell in my heart.'

II

Consider the welcome that greeted the Virgin Mother. It was more than a tie of blood which bound these two women together. For Elisabeth knew the destiny of her unborn son and the nearness of the advent of the Messiah. But she did not know of whom He was to be born. But when Mary comes into her presence, she recognizes that she is in the presence of the mother of the Messiah. The words which she utters, inspired by the Holy Ghost, are the homage of the unborn son to his Lord. Repeat with Elisabeth the *Hail Mary*.

Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and spake out. How often does not the Holy Spirit of God inspire you and you do not act! Sloth besets your life. As you advance in years you will find sloth to be of the most pressing of all temptations. The demon that walketh by noonday is very clever. But do not hearken to his wiles. Resolve to act on every inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Consider the temptation to sloth. It is responsible for much failure in religion. Sheer laziness is the source of most spiritual failure. Success in all walks of life is obtained by hard work. The day labourer comes home at night tired, and yet the morrow sees him at his work again. He cannot take a holiday just because he is tired. His family has to be fed and clothed. The school teacher is exhausted and discouraged at the end of a hard day, but she has to go back to the same monotonous task. She must work on, no matter how weary she is. The business man comes home with tired body and exhausted brain, but he must take up the grind the next day. But whenever the Christian becomes wearied in his labour of preparing his soul for eternity, he decides to take a holiday from his religion. If he worked as hard at his religion as the banker does at his business, the Christian would reap the same success.

Examine your life carefully. Does Satan tempt you with sloth? Do not yield to him. What is it which God wants you to do now?

Resolve to do with great joy, and at the first possible moment, what God wants you to do.

III

Consider further the intolerance to which sloth leads. 'For the slothful Christian, saints are incorrigibly stupid, martyrs are incorrigibly obstinate, priests are incorrigibly professional, missionaries incorrigibly restless, sisters incorrigibly tender; white lips that can just breathe "Jesus" incorrigibly awful. For the slothful Christian, God and Christ, death and judgement, have no real significance. The Atonement is a plank to be clutched by dying fingers in the moment of death that we may gurgle out, "Yes," when we are asked if we are happy.'

That is an awful picture of the results of sloth. Then resolve once and for all that you will drive the demon sloth out of your life. There is no success in any walk of life save by hard work. Truly the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. Would you attain God and the Vision of Love? Then work at your religion. Scan carefully your life and decide just how the sin of sloth besets you and plan accordingly. Resolve to be energetic about your religion to-day.

IV

Consider the bond of sympathy between Mary and Elisabeth. What wonderful hours they must have spent together. And it is this com-

munity of feeling which created the bond of sympathy between them. If you long sometimes for some one who will truly sympathize with you in all your waverings and doubts, your sins and your mistakes, there waits One Who alone can really sympathize. He is so truly Man that He can understand, and because He is God He can help. Go, then, to Him and open your heart. What is it that troubles you this day? Tell it to Him, and He will sympathize and give comfort.

V

Consider now the words of the *Magnificat*. Read them over very slowly. 'My soul doth magnify the Lord.' First of all comes praise and adoration. The wonder of the Incarnation brings Mary to the feet of God. So must it be with all souls who begin to realize the goodness and mercies and love of God. Think back over your life. Write out all the blessings which you can remember. Surely the sight of all the great things which God has done for you will elicit an act of adoration. 'Blessed, praised, and adored be our Lord Jesus Christ on His throne of glory in heaven and in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar.'

'He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden.' After praise comes humility. What a wonderful virtue is humility! How hard to acquire, how difficult to define. Humility is self-forgetting, absorption in God. To

set out to acquire it would be an act of pride. It is lost at the mere thought of possessing it. Our Lady does not set out to acquire or practise humility. She simply forgets herself and becomes absorbed in God. That is humility, forgetting self ; thinking of God and of others. You who are so greedy of praise, who so often desire compliments, who resent the slightest criticism, who think yourself unappreciated, you will do well to contemplate the self-forgetfulness of Blessed Mary.

'He that is mighty hath done to me great things.' Once more turn your thoughts, as does Blessed Mary, to God. Like her you must find God to be all in all, you must train yourselves always to turn instinctively to God. He must be the background of all your thoughts and acts. Make an act of union with God.

'My God, I believe that Thou art Love and that in Thee I live and move and have my being. Thou art all and I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing, and I desire nothing but Thee. Cast me not away from Thy presence and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. O Lord, in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded.'

'His mercy is on them that fear Him.' Consider all the mercies of God to you. Think of all the things that you resented. Have they not been your chiefest blessings ? Think of three instances of God's blessings to you and

give thanks to Him, saying the holy Name of Jesus three times.

'He hath showed strength with His arm.' Think of what your life would be without the Sacraments, without the grace of God. Think of times when perhaps you tried to get along without God. Think of how weak you were without Him; think of the strength of His arm when you returned to the everlasting arms. Think of some present need, and place all your trust in the everlasting arms.

'He hath put down the mighty from their seats and hath exalted the humble and meek.' The *Magnificat* may be thought of as the presentation of the antithesis between the flesh and the spirit. Eventually the kingdom of God will triumph over the kingdom of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Review history. Is it not a constant repetition of the mighty being thrown headlong and the exaltation of the humble and meek? It is so slow in coming, perhaps you say. But what are you doing to advance the coming of the kingdom? Every act of love, of self-sacrifice, of doing the will of God, advances the kingdom. Resolve to do your part.

'He hath filled the hungry with good things.' 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' Do you hunger and thirst for God? Make an act of desire for God.

'Come, Lord Jesus, and dwell in Thy servant's heart in the fullness of Thy strength,

in the perfection of Thy power, and in the holiness of Thy Spirit, and rule over hostile acts in the might of Thy Spirit and in the glory of Thy Father.'

'He hath holpen His servant.' He always will help His servant who puts his trust in Him. He always will remember His promises. But you must come to Him. And while you are yet a great way off He will come to meet you. Then lift your heart to God and place all your life lovingly in His keeping.

IV

THE MESSAGE TO S. JOSEPH

Read S. Matthew i. 18–25.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

TURN your thoughts to God. Try to put out of your mind the thought of everything else but of God. Make an act of desire for God. 'Come, O dear Lord God, and make me wholly Thine.' Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and the *Hail Mary*.

I

Picture the scene of your mental prayer. Three months have passed, and now the Blessed Virgin is returning to Nazareth. The joy of home coming! Think of the happiness which has been yours when you have returned home. Consider the joy at attaining your home in the heavens. Make an act of gratitude to God for all that He has given you in the way of the joys of home.

'I adore, I praise, I bless Thee, for all that Thou hast given me in my home. In Thy love and in Thy mercy Thou hast bestowed

upon me far more than I deserve. O make me love and bless Thee more and more.'

But to the Blessed Mother the joy of her home coming was dulled by what she was to tell S. Joseph. Although conscious of the events which led to her condition she must have felt the first thrust of the sword when she spoke to her betrothed. However deep his trust in Blessed Mary, a message from heaven was needed to give him complete assurance.

That assurance was given S. Joseph in a dream. 'While he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife : for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name Jesus : for He shall save His people from their sins.'

God reassured S. Joseph in his trouble. God is ever mindful of His children. In S. Joseph's case it was very easy to reassure him, for he was simple and gentle of character. It was this very simplicity of his soul which made him open-minded, ready and eager for spiritual advance. He was willing to be taught of God. We hear a great deal these days about being 'broad-minded.' But the broad-mindedness which is commendable is that of S. Joseph—willingness to learn. Because he was simple and open-minded and willing to be taught, it

was easy for God to reassure him. He was asked to believe in the virgin motherhood of Mary and that the Child to be born was to save Israel. He was asked a great deal, and that, too, all in a dream. But he did not hesitate in believing the message of the angel. Give thanks to God for the simplicity and true broad-mindedness and love of S. Joseph. Say the *Gloria Patri*.

II

How is it with you? Do you pride yourself on being broad-minded? Beware that your broad-mindedness is not shallow-mindedness, or a cloak for self-will. Many a sin has been hidden under the cloak of broad-mindedness. Many a silly and empty doctrine has been taught on that plea. Consider your life. Are you willing to learn? If so, it will be easy for God to reassure you when you are in trouble. No matter how difficult the situation, if you have been taught of God you will be used to the ways in which the wisdom of God manifests itself. You will be prepared for the acts of God, for 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men.'

III

S. Joseph was the spouse of our Lady and the guardian of our Lord. Too little honour is given him in popular devotion. During the infancy and youth of our Lord, S. Joseph was the guardian and protector of God incarnate.

How wonderful a vocation to guard and protect God! Such is your vocation too. The Christian life is not an imitation of an absent ideal, but the growth of the Christ within you. 'The kingdom of God is within.' You have to guard and protect the life of our Lord within you. You do not have to strain after an absent God. He is within you, in your care, abiding in your heart just as surely as the Infant slept in the arms of Joseph. Think on this.

Again, in a very special way you are the guardian and protector of your God. When last you received your Communion, you were the tabernacle of the Divine Humanity. In your moments after Communion did you realize this wonder? What was your thanksgiving like? To make a devout thanksgiving after Communion is one of the hardest parts of the spiritual life. God comes to you and offers all. In your last Communion God offered you all the love in the universe. More love than was contained in your Communion does not exist. God offered you all the love there is. What have you done with it? Resolve to make better Communions, better thanksgivings.

'O my God, I will love Thee more and more. In myself I have nothing that is pleasing unto Thee. But I have a heart, and with that heart I will love Thee more and more. Then take not Thy presence from me, for I resolve always to love Thee, and only to love Thee always.'

IV

Again, think of your home life. Is it in any way an imitation of the life of the Holy Family? It is not an easy thing to bring up children in the love and fear of God. It is not an easy matter to be a loving and considerate spouse. It is hard to know when to be strict and when to be lenient, when to acquiesce and when to refuse. The only way to learn this wisdom is to follow the example of Mary and Joseph. Then think on their love, their unselfishness, their self-denial, their trust in God and in each other. Think on their example and order your life likewise. Realize that love means an endless giving.

V

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Read S. Luke ii. 1–20.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

THINK of the presence of God. God is everywhere, nearer to you than you are to yourself. When all has faded from your mind but the thought of God's presence, say the opening devotions. Offer your mental prayer to God as an act of intercession for some one whom you love.

1

Picture the scene in your mind. The short winter day is closing and the chill of night descending as two travellers come to Bethlehem. They are wearied from the three days' journey from Nazareth. Where are they to lodge? The little village was crowded with strangers who had come to register. Every house was fully occupied. The inn was filled. There remained the stable. There, in the cold dark winter's night, Mary brought forth her first-born Son, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger. Do you see the

picture? The dim cave, lit by a flickering lantern, the adoring figures of Mary and Joseph, the rough manger, and in the midst of the rough straw, God. Join with the hosts of invisible angels and say the *Sanctus* as an act of worship.

'Holy Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High. Amen.'

II

Consider the meaning of the Incarnation. First of all Jesus is God—God of God and Light of Light, very God of very God. He is more than a good man, He is more than a great prophet, He is more than a moral leader. He is God. Make an act of adoration.

But not only is He God; He is Man. The Creed is very careful not to say, 'He was made *a* Man' but that 'He was made *Man*.' God the Second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, remaining what He was, that is, God, took unto Himself human nature. Christ our Lord gathered unto Himself the nature of man. This is a very wonderful truth. Consider what it means.

First of all He was a Jew. He was born of a Jewish mother and was the Prince of the House of David. But He was more than just a Jew, for He had taken unto Himself all of human nature. This means that He had gathered unto Himself morally all of the white

nature. Give thanks to God that our Lord has the nature of the Gentiles as well as that of the Jews.

Secondly, although externally and physically He had taken to Himself the white nature, morally He was more than white. He was Man. This means that morally He has taken unto Himself all the virtues and characteristics of the black people and of the yellow people as well as the characteristics of the white. Give thanks that our Lord is the Saviour of all men. Perhaps you have despised negroes or yellow people. If so, you do not understand the meaning of the Incarnation. Thank God that Jesus is the Saviour of all.

Thirdly, although physically our Lord was a man, He was more than that, He was Man. This means that He has gathered to Himself all the instincts and virtues and characteristics of womenkind as well as of men. So it is that He can understand and sympathize with women as well as with men. Thank God for the Incarnation.

III

Consider what the Incarnation means. Because He is Man it makes no difference whether you be white or black or yellow, male or female, young or old, learned or ignorant, Jesus has taken your nature unto Him in the Incarnation. This means that He alone fully understands you. Because He is truly Man He can understand and sympathize, and because He is truly

God He can help you. Then take Him your trouble and cast all at His feet. Most of all give yourself.

'Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I am, all that I have, Thou hast given me and I return them to Thee to be ordered according to Thy will. Give me only Thy love, for with Thy love I am rich above all. My God and my All!'

IV

Within, the cave was all dark. But without, the heavens were ablaze with light. Heaven and earth were all afire, as the glory of the Lord wrapped the skies in a mantle of light. Hark while the angel speaks to the shepherds and to you: 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' Give thanks to God and join with the heavenly host in saying the *Gloria in excelsis*.

The hymn of praise ceased. The great light faded from the skies. But the shepherds said one to another, 'Let us go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph and the Babe.'

See the shepherds entering the cave. Look! a little lamb is following to worship the Lamb of God. In mind carry yourself to the throne

of the Lamb and kneeling there give your life into the keeping of the Infant King.

'But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.' She pondered on the message of the angel, on the Birth in Bethlehem, on the story of the shepherds. Every event in the life of her Son comes as a fresh revelation of His love.

Follow the example of the Blessed Mother, and ponder on the love of God for you. Go over all the details of your life, and see how every act and every event is a fresh revelation of the love of God for you. That cross which you so resented, that suffering which seemed so unfair, that problem which seemed so needless, now you can ponder and see how each event is a sign of His love. 'He loved me and gave Himself for me,' S. Paul said. Say the words over and over again: 'He loved me and gave Himself for me.'

V

The angel spoke of peace. 'Peace on earth to men of goodwill.' How are you to attain to peace? By being of goodwill. But what is goodwill? The things you have already meditated on—simplicity, obedience, love, desire for God. Our Lady and S. Joseph were people of goodwill. Study them. And the lesson which comes from them is the completeness of their gift to God. They gave all. To give part of your life will not help. There

is no peace in giving a part of one's life. What is it which you have not given God ; what is it which you are keeping back ? Give *all*, and you will have the peace of God.

VI

THE PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD

Read S. Luke ii. 22–38.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen*

REMIND yourself of the presence of God. Try to efface all other thoughts from your mind except that of the presence of God. 'Thou art about my path and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways.' Say the usual opening prayers.

I

Picture the scene of the Presentation of our Lord and the Purification of His blessed Mother. For this twofold service the Holy Family went up to the Temple. The ceremony of the presentation of the first-born was very simple. There were only two short benedictions, and then the redemption money was paid.

Consider your redemption. 'Ye are bought with a price.' Your redemption was no simple matter. It cost the Son of God many long

hours of suffering. You were bought with the price of a whole life of love and suffering and obedience. It was not the blood and tears in themselves which were pleasing to God, but the life of love which was willing to suffer even unto blood and tears. But Jesus never counted the price. He never thought, as some foolish pictures have put it, 'This have I done for thee, what doest thou for Me?' He never thought of Himself or of the price He was paying. He simply loved you. Give thanks for the wonderful, selfless love of Jesus.

'O dear Lord Jesus, O deep abyss of Love, O ocean of Charity! How may I express my love for Thee? O my joyful God, my God and my All! When shall I love Thee with burning affection? When shall my spirit be closely united to Thee? When wilt Thou carry me out of myself and unite me wholly to Thee? O dear Lord, remove all in me that hinders perfect union with Thee.'

II

The purification of the mother is not in any way to be identified with the modern service of the Churching of Women. The latter is a thanksgiving after childbirth, the former a sin-offering and a burnt-offering. It may be objected that Mary, the sinless Mother, had no need of purification. And quite rightly. But she made the offering in that spirit of loving obedience and of utter selflessness of abandon-

ment to God which she caught from her Son. That is the great characteristic of the Blessed Mother, utter and selfless devotion to God. That indeed is the very heart and core of sanctity, the spirit of selfless offering to the will of God.

Holiness is the result of union with God. No one becomes holy by good works but only by union with God. That union with God must express itself in good works, in external manifestations of courtesy and consideration and self-sacrifice. But the heart of it is selfless abandonment to the loving will of God.

Have you given yourself to God in that selfless and loving way? Or are there resentments and complaints in your life? Consider your life carefully and purge out all thoughts of self. Offer yourself wholly to God.

'O my God, I am so full of self and thoughts of self. Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord. Take me and make me wholly Thine. I accept with joy Thy will for me.'

III

Consider now the witness of Simeon. 'It was revealed unto Simeon that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ.' Your religion is a revealed religion. It can be proved by logical argument that there is ultimate reality. But to identify that reality with a personal God requires an act of faith. Simeon had given himself to God in faith. He lived

a life of faith. When he was led by the Spirit into the Temple, he saw the young Child and recognized in Him the Lord's Christ. It was not proved to him by philosophic or syllogistic reasoning. He simply knew Jesus to be the Christ.

Simeon's experience is the type of all Christian experience. To all men at some time, under some circumstance, is given a revelation of God. God reveals Himself to all men. He has revealed Himself to you.

In some way God has revealed to all the sons of men that He is, that He is Love, and that He loves them.

It is that present experience of the presence and love of God in your life which constitutes the heart of Catholicism. God is, God is in you, God loves you. That is the heart of your religion.

There is a type of religion among us which emphasizes an entirely different form of religion. It reduces Christianity to the history of something that happened nigh on two thousand years ago. In the man Jesus, it tells you, is the ideal life which you are to imitate. But if you ask *why* you should imitate that life, you are told because it is the ideal life, the very best life that has ever been lived. If you ask what will happen if you do *not* imitate the life of Jesus, the answer is that nothing will happen. *And nothing does happen.*

The Catholic religion is interested not only

in what Jesus *did*, but still more in what He *does* in your life. You are to think not only of what He *was*, but still more of what He *is* now. You are to consider not only what He *did* for you, but still more what Jesus *is doing* for you now. You are urged not to imitate an absent example, but to realize the presence of Jesus in you now. The whole emphasis is not that He loved you, but that He loves you now, He is in you this instant, claiming you as His own. Your work is not to imitate Him, but to give yourself to Him so completely that He may live in you, think in you, love in you, wholly possess you. You are to become God-possessed.

The Catholic religion shifts the emphasis from what *you* are to do to what *Jesus* is doing in you. The kingdom of God is within you. You are not to try in your own feeble strength to be brave and good and true, but you are to let Him possess you wholly. And if Jesus lives in you, you will have His courage, His goodness, His truth. Say three times, 'Not Thine, but Thee.'

IV

God has revealed Himself to you. The Catholic Faith bids you realize the present revelation of the presence and love of God in yourself. The presentation of Christianity as an ethical ideal with a long list of prohibitions has no interest for you. You are interested in the present action of the sacred humanity of our

Lord on your humanity. Your attention is fixed not on what Jesus did, but on what Jesus is and what He is doing in you now. Otherwise the Gospel sinks to the level of a twice-told tale, and its influence lessens as it recedes in the distance.

Simeon knew his God. God has been revealed to you. God is Love and God loves you now. The Love of God, our Lord, is shed abroad in your heart to-day.

It is so very simple. God is ever seeking you. Then give yourself to God. Ask Him to come and dwell in your heart and possess you entirely. God is Love ; that is, an endless Giving. Love is the eternal and steadfast giving of the best, not for time but for eternity, not for the sake of self but the sake of the beloved. God so loved you that He gave. Give therefore yourself to God. Resolve that frequently during the day you will offer yourself to God.

VII

THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

Read S. Matthew ii. 1–12.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

MAKE yourself as quiet as possible and remind yourself of the presence of God. 'O my God, Who being within me art more present to me than I am to myself, perfect, I pray Thee, this fellowship with Thyself, and do Thou work so great a union within me that I may become one with Thee for ever.' Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and the *Hail Mary*.

1

Picture to yourself the scene of the Visit of the Magi. 'Behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and have come to worship Him.' They came to pay their respects to Herod, not because they thought Jesus was born there but because in the capital they would find information about His birthplace. But the rumour of the birth of the King produced on

Herod a far different impression from that on the Magi. Herod took immediate steps and gathered together all the chief priests and scribes and demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, 'In Bethlehem of Judaea.'

The conduct of Herod is consistent with his cunningness of character. He asks the Magi to tell him when they have found the Child on the pretence that he wishes to worship also. Make an act of contrition for all sin. 'My God, I am very sorry that I have sinned against Thee Who art so good. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake, and I will try to sin no more.'

II

When the Magi left the king they again saw the star, which guided them to where the young Child lay. Consider the externals. The Holy Family had removed from the cave to a house. How removed from the audience chamber of a king was the humble room in which the King of kings received His pilgrims! The Infant and His Mother showed no special signs of royalty. But the external humble signs made no impression on the Wise Men. They looked with the eyes of faith and saw Him of Whom it was written that 'the Gentiles shall come to Thy light and kings to the brightness of Thy rising.' What a wondrous gift is that of faith. Ask God to give it you.

'My God, I believe in Thee and all Thy

Church doth teach because Thou hast said it and Thy word is true.' 'O God, invisible, when shall I behold Thee not as in a mirror but face to face? O that I knew Thee as I am known of Thee, that I might love Thee as Thou lovest me. But I will love Thee as much as I can until I behold Thee as I desire.'

III

Consider Mary's attitude towards the visit of the kings. Her whole life was shrouded in mysteries. She 'kept all things and pondered them in her heart.' So it was no surprise to her that kings should come and worship her Babe. That is the way in which to understand the ways of God. Accept all things and ponder them in your heart. What is there which you do not understand? Accept it and ponder it in your heart.

'O God of infinite greatness, higher than the heavens, deeper than the depth, broader than the earth, wider than the sea, Who fillest all things, Who penetratest all things, give light to the mind of Thy servant. I accept all things at Thy loving hand. Give Thy servant an understanding heart. Give me such love that I see Thee more distinctly by faith than with bodily sight.'

IV

Consider the three gifts. They are the gifts of kings to the King of kings—gold, frankin-

cense, and myrrh. Consider the gold of oblation and worship. Worship is giving, the giving of ourselves to God. Our Lord offered to the Father the oblation of a perfect life. Your redemption is wrought not only by the amazing sorrow and deep anguish of Calvary but by the oblation of a perfect life. He made that Sacrifice once and for all on the Cross. It can never be *repeated*. But in heaven it is *re-pleaded*. In the Mass it is *re-presented*. What He did on the Cross He does openly in heaven and under sacramental veils in the Mass. 'As often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup ye do show the Lord's death till He come.' That is the business of your life, to show forth in your life that which He did on the Cross, that which He does openly in heaven and under veils on the altar—the offering of a perfect oblation to the Father. Then make an entire oblation of your life to God.

'All things are created for Thee, my God. Truly Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee. Thou art the city towards which I journey, the harbour towards which I sail, Thou the magnet of my heart. Then take me, my life, my will, my desires, my all. Take me and make me wholly Thine.'

V

Frankincense. Consider the incense of intercession and prayer. He is always more ready to hear than we are to pray. The cries which

go up to God are so often selfish, self-willed, foolish, blind, pitiful, ignorant. Yet God is glad to receive them. God is glad to receive from you any gift, however unworthy, even as you gladly accept a sticky sweet from the dirty hand of your child. Why is it dear to you? Simply because it was offered in love.

Consider your prayers, your morning and evening prayers. Have they changed at all in the last five years? They should. If your prayers are really the breath of your soul, they should change and grow as your love for God grows. Have your intercessions been made in an orderly way? Has your mental prayer been persevered in? Has it grown and developed? Your prayers of aspiration in the street and at work, have they grown and increased? Consider your whole life of prayer. Is it one which you can offer to God?

'Let the fire of Thy love burn on the altar of my heart, and may it grow into a flame of sacrifice. Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight as the incense and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice of all to Thee.'

VI

Myrrh. The bitterness of myrrh. What a strange gift for a King! And yet how it sums up our Lord's life of complete self-abandonment to the Father. He came not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. The virtue of abandonment to God. Per-

fectly Jesus made that offering. How hard for you ! You love your own will, you rely on your own judgement, you cling to yourself. But you must know that if you desire to worship at the manger throne you must abandon all to Jesus.

'With the holy Magi I adore Thee, my Lord and God. With them I offer all to Thee. Come, O divine Infant, and take possession of all my life.'

VIII

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

Read S. Matthew ii. 13–18.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

PLACE yourself consciously in the presence of God. 'Illuminate my mind, O Lord, that I may understand with my heart: lift up my senses and my thoughts that I may think only of Thee. Put out of my mind all thoughts but of Thee. So shall I love and praise Thee for ever.' Make an act of faith. 'I believe in Thee, O Lord, that Thou art Love, and Thou hast loved me and given Thyself for me. Open, O Lord, mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things of Thy love.' Say the opening devotions.

I

'And when the Wise Men had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, take the young Child, and His Mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.'

Often in our Lord's life glory and suffering appear together. The Magi, warned of God also in a dream that they should not return to Herod, departed into their country another way. And Herod, baffled in his hope of securing the young Child through the Wise Men, seeks to attain his end by an indiscriminate slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem, from two years old and under. From the small population of that village there could not have been more than twenty of these at the most. Nevertheless it was a terrible deed, and these babes are rightly hailed the first martyrs for Christ. Make an act of contrition for this sin and all the sin of the world.

'O King most dear, Thou wast but a Babe when the world began to persecute Thee. As Herod sought to hurt Thee of old, so do now the nations of the earth sin against Thee. For all sinners I make an act of contrition and declare that we are very sorry to sin against Thee, the Holy One of God. O forgive us, and help us to sin no more.'

II

With the beauty of Bethlehem and the splendour of the visit of the kings comes this tragedy of the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem. Over the song of the angels comes the voice of mourning and lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children. So is all of life, bitter-sweet. But is there as much of a disaster as one would think? There is grief and sorrow at the death

of a child. There is also future treasure, for the child is always to be thought of with great joy. This child has been caught back to God pure and without sin. Here are no disappointments, no failures, no sin. The mediaeval artists who pictured these martyrs as joyfully attending our Lord's flight into Egypt had the right conception. They joyed for two reasons, for being set free from the land of temptation, and for being in the Lord's presence.

'With Thee to flee away, O sweetest Jesus, from the hardships of this world, is no cause for mourning. Rather, dear Lord, will I joy for those who are at rest with Thee. O let me ever accompany Thee, dear Lord, in all Thy flight and be with Thee for ever.'

III

The apocryphal gospels have some very lovely fairy tales about the flight into Egypt. They tell how the hot sands grew green at the touch of the holy travellers' feet, how springs of sparkling water bubbled up at their need, of how the tall palm trees bowed their stately heads to offer fruit to satisfy their hunger, of how the lions and wild beasts played at the Holy Child's feet, of how the idols fell down as He passed. They are very lovely stories. But the Church in her wisdom has never inserted them into the Scriptures, because, beautiful as they are, the truth is still more lovely. The holy tra-

vellers were footsore and hungry and thirsty by day ; by night, chilled by the desert winds, they trembled at the roaring of the wild beasts. Yet they never lost patience.

The next time your day seems very long and you are tired and friendless in a strange land, the next time you are tempted to be discouraged or lose patience, think of the Holy Family in their desperate flight into Egypt. Think of their patience and perseverance and loving trust. Ponder the divine patience.

' O dear Jesus, accompany me in my flight in this world and never leave me, for without Thee I cannot find the way. In Thee is all my trust, let me never be confounded.'

IV

Egypt is a symbol of abandonment to our Lord. Consider that when Jesus came into Mary's life, with Him came suffering. If you would follow the Master, you must be prepared to accept His Cross. ' It is the way the Master went, shall not the servant tread it too ? ' Nothing will turn out as you expect it. You must not only follow Him but follow in His, not your, way. It is so hard to abandon self. We cling to self so hard, we are willing to follow Christ but we want to do it in our way. Then make an act of loving abandonment to God.

' Give me, O Lord, a loving heart that I may love Thee enough to give all to Thee. Give me so pure an intention that I may not seek comfort

but only Thy dear will. Help me to give all and so shall I gain all, for Thou art the Life and Love of my soul Who hast created me to love and serve Thee.'

Perhaps the Lord Jesus does not ask that you literally leave all and follow Him. But He does ask that you put not your trust in the number of your possessions, that they serve you and not gain such a hold over you that you serve them. What is there which now you would not care to part with? Is there some object so dear to you that you would not lovingly give it to God if He asked for it? You must learn to hold your possessions lightly. Think of the things that are especially dear to you and offer them to God.

'O that I might be separated from the love of all created things and the cares which belong to them, rather than that they should hinder me in my journey Godward. Set me free, O Lord, from the love of all material things that I may run with swiftness the race that is set to Thee.'

v

Think, too, of the isolation of the Holy Family in Egypt. They were far from home and cut off from all their companions in religion. On all sides loomed the heathen temples, from everywhere came the sounds of heathen worship. Every effort was made to turn them from God. Is it not much the same with you? You live in a land called Christian. Is it such? From

all sides comes the call to worship at the shrine of Mammon. Every effort is made to take you from your God. You see others drifting away. Will you stand fast in your isolation as did Mary and Joseph ?

IX

THE LIFE AT NAZARETH

Read S. Matthew ii. 19–23 ; S. Luke ii. 40.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

THINK of God. He is always waiting for you to come to Him. 'I rejoice when I read in the Scriptures that Thou art Love. What more sweet, more joyful to hear? Give me, then, O Lord, Thyself. Give me this Love. I will love Thee as Thou hast willed.' Say the usual opening prayers.

I

Scripture is very silent about the Childhood of our Lord. Again in a dream an angel directed S. Joseph to return into the land of Israel. 'But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither : notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee : and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth.'

The impression left on our minds on reading this passage is that the settlement at Nazareth

was not of Joseph's choosing. It was determined of God that they should live in Nazareth. We see the Holy Family co-operating with this divine direction. Their plans are laid aside, and they come to live in the little village of Nazareth. Do you co-operate with the divine plans as whole-heartedly as did the Holy Family? Or do you resent the plans of God? Commit your way and all your plans to God.

'I am Thy servant, O Lord. Give me understanding that I may learn Thy ways. I do not belong unto myself but to Thee. Then take my life and make it wholly Thine. Thou hast given it me and I give it back to Thee to be ordered according to Thy word.'

II

Consider the life of the Holy Family. Picture the carpenter's shop. Here laboured S. Joseph and the divine Son and the children of S. Joseph. Our Lady was the Blessed Mother of this family. It was an unpretentious house, the home of a poor man. The rooms were small and people had to live very close together, just as a poor family has to do to-day. And yet what a spirit of love prevailed here, the spirit of forbearance and unselfishness and selflessness. Here was a holy rivalry to see who could do the most for the other. A holy family, an image of the happiness of the ever-blessed Trinity.

'O my God, how can I thank Thee for this

picture of love and happiness. O wondrous humility of the ever-Virgin, help me to be humble. O surpassing tenderness of Joseph, assist me in my life. O Jesus, Wisdom and Love Incarnate, Thy very silence cried aloud of obedience and love and bids me ask for humility and tenderness and obedience and love.'

III

Consider the family life which you see around you. Without a real family life the nation and the religion of God are in danger. What do you see in the family life of to-day? Do you see the tenderness and self-effacement and respect of Nazareth? In some few instances, yes, and thank God for these exceptions. 'O my God, I do thank and praise Thee for the families that honour Thy holy Name. May they ever grow and increase to their happiness and to Thy great glory.'

But in so many other cases, alas, one sees the very opposite of the vision of the Holy Family. Instead of self-sacrifice one sees self-determination; instead of humility, the claim 'to live one's own life'; instead of a holy rivalry to see who could do the most, the claim to the right to personal happiness; instead of mutual trust and understanding, we see bickerings and naggings and perversity of self-will. Make an act of contrition for the failure of family life as you see it so often to-day.

'O my God, I am so very sorry that men have

strayed so far from Thy love. Father, we have all sinned against heaven and are no more worthy to be called Thy children. But wash us more and more from our iniquities and in the precious Blood cleanse us from our sin. Grant that once more we may be so restored to Thee that we may all be holy families in Thy sight.'

IV

Consider your relations to your family. Do you honour father and mother? Do you assist them if they are alive? Do you write to them if they are absent? Do you pray for them if they are departed? In any case do you pray for them, do you enter sympathetically into their wishes, do you respect them, do you co-operate with them in every way? Consider carefully your attitude towards your family. Is yours a holy family?

'My Lord and my God, I have sinned and done grievously in Thy sight. But now I will begin to live and to love, not in mine own strength but relying only on the strength of Thy holy arm. Stablish, O God, Thy rule in my heart. Give me respect and patience and understanding and a will intent on Thee. So shall I assist my family and honour the Holy Family and glorify Thee.'

V

If you have children consider your attitude towards them. It is no light matter to be the

parent of an immortal soul. To you is given the care of a soul whose future is largely conditioned by you. Call to mind the words of our Lord : 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'

What training have you given your children ? What example have you set them ? Have you co-operated with them and tried to understand their difficulties and problems, so trifling to you, so important to them ? Have you taken them seriously, or have you laughed and jeered at them ? Have you co-operated with their teachers and priests ? Do you go to Confession and to Communion with them ? Are you continually studying them and seeking to eliminate the evil and draw out the good in them ? Do your children feel that they can always come to you in trouble ? Are you a loving and understanding parent ? Consider all these things.

What part is religion playing in your life ? Do your children see it to be a power and a source of strength to you ? Is there in your home the peace of a recollected life, the order of a wise life, the love and understanding and sympathy of the life at Nazareth ? Is it natural to speak of God and of religion and of holy things in your family ? Is your home a home of love and joy and gladness ?

'O my God, I honour Thee for the Holy

Family of Nazareth. I am determined to make my family like the Holy Family, a life like unto that of the Blessed Trinity. I confess that I have failed, and failed grievously. But by the help of Thy grace and the prayers of Thy holy ones I am determined to amend. Holy Mary, pray for us ; holy S. Joseph, intercede for us ; holy Child Jesus, send Thy grace into my heart that I may love and praise Thee for ever.'

X

THE VISIT TO THE TEMPLE

Read S. Luke ii. 41–52.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

MAKE an act of faith in God. 'My God, I believe that Thou art One in substance and that Thou art Three Persons in One God. I pray that my faith be kept whole and undefiled. Increase in me that faith which once Thou didst implant in me, and grant that I may live according to that faith all the days of my life.' Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and the *Hail Mary*.

I

Picture the scene. With what eagerness must not the Child Jesus have looked forward to the visit to the Temple. It would have been a wonderful thing to any Jewish boy to visit Jerusalem. But how much more to Him Who was of the House of David and Son of the everliving God. Picture the joy of our Lord when first He looked upon the Holy City. Make an act of desire to see Jesus and the heavenly Jerusalem.

'O Lord Jesus, my joy and my Lord, when shall I see Thee and all Thy blessed saints? I long to be with Thee and praise Thee everlastingly. Grant that all my words and thoughts and desires be united with Thee.'

II

After the visit the holy Mother and S. Joseph returned, but 'the Child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and His Mother knew not of it. But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.'

Consider the possibility of your losing Jesus. It is very easy to lose Him. To lose Him does not mean that you must commit any great sin. Casualness, forgetfulness, sloth, routine, formalism, all these may lead to your losing Jesus. Are you making your religion the most vital and important part of your life? Perhaps you cannot spend more time on your religion than on anything else, but are you putting it first in your life? Resolve to try to perform your religious duties with more devotion. Possibly you cannot devote more time to them, but you can try to put more energy into them. It is not a matter of time so much as of spiritual energy.

'O most mighty Lord, pour Thy strength into my heart, for I desire to be faithful all the days of my life. Grant me the spirit of holy zeal to follow Thee wheresoever Thou leadest.'

III

They found Him in the Temple. It is in the Church that you will expect to find God. Of course Jesus is everywhere as God. But the Church is His Body, the mystical Body of Christ. God works through His Sacraments, though of course God is not tied to sacraments. Nevertheless the Church is the normal place wherein to find Jesus. Consider the Church of God.

The Church of God is the Body of Christ, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints. 'The body of the baptized is the Flesh of the Crucified.' All baptized souls are one family in Christ. First of all, there is the fighting Church, the Church Militant—all living souls who in the grace of their union with God are manfully fighting against sin, overcoming self, sin, and Satan. Give thanks to God for all souls who are loyal to Christ Jesus. 'We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting.'

Then there is the waiting Church, the Church Expectant, the hosts in purgatory who are being purged of their sin. These souls are very happy in their sufferings for they know that the more they suffer the sooner they may be admitted to the Beatific Vision of God in love. Pray for the holy souls, and especially for those dear to you. 'May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.'

Then there are the saints in glory, all those valiant ones who enjoy the vision of God. There in the temple which needs no light, for the Lamb of God is the Light, is the throng of worshippers who sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Join your praises to those of the saints of God. 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High.'

And over all these saints rises the figure of the Queen of Saints, Mary ever-Virgin, Mother of God. In her office as Mother of the Redeemer, the second Eve, and Mother of all living, she stands supreme in her absorption of love. Have you her absorption in love of Jesus?

IV

Great and lovely is the Church of God, the Spouse of Christ, and the Communion of Saints. And yet this does not exhaust the wonders of the Body of Christ.

The Church of God is sacramental, the extension of the Incarnation. The Church is not only the mystical Body; she is also sacramental and symbolic. This means that the Church is not only the means of conveying purity from the most pure heart of Jesus to your heart, but the Church is also symbolical of all purity. There will always be purity in the world. But because of the pure in heart who see God, because of the purity of the immaculate Mother, the ideal of purity is raised and empowered

from a negative quality to a positive love of all things pure. Since the Church was born on Pentecost, purity has grown deeper and wider and more beautiful. The example of the holy Mother, of S. Agnes, and of all who have stood for purity has sanctified the ideal of purity. Pray for the deepening of purity in the hearts of men.

There was and always will be courage in the world. But the Church stands, not only as a vessel of courage, but as a symbol of all bravery. The black fear which dogs the souls of men has lessened because of the indomitable courage of the Son of God and of all the saints who have fought in the power of their Captain. The Church is the symbol of courage, for she alone is unconquered to-day. Pray for the gift of courage.

There always was and always will be self-sacrifice in the world. But the Church stands for ever as the supreme symbol of self-sacrifice. She it is who has given to the world the motto, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.' Oh, pray that the virtue of sacrifice grow till it be merged in the vision of the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world.

V

The Church is the Body of Christ, the extension of the Incarnation, the Communion of the Saints, the symbol of all righteousness. 'He

that is not with Me is against Me.' On which side are you? Because she is human, the Church of God is soiled and rent and fainting. Because she is divine, the Body of Christ, the Church is the power of God and the symbol of all that is lovely and beautiful and attractive. Then give your allegiance to the Bride of Christ.

'O Child of wondrous wisdom, Who didst sit in the midst of the doctors, grant me to listen to Thy words. O shine into my heart and increase in me the love of all that is pure and strong and self-sacrificing. Grant me thy blessing that I may go from strength to strength until I reach the perfect day of union with Thee.'

VI

'I must be about My Father's business.' Thus spake the Son of God. What is your business? Is it also symbolic? Is your business part of your heavenly Father's business? Is it such a business that it may bear the heavenly seal? Consider your work. Do not say in excuse, 'A man must live.' A man must live unto God. Ask God to bless your work. 'Direct me, O Lord, in all my work, and further me with Thy continual help.'

XI

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH

Read S. Luke ii. 51–52.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

QUIET yourself in body and soul and think of the presence of God. 'O Lord my God, may all my thoughts be of Thee. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be always acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord my strength and my Redeemer.' Say the *Veni Creator* and any other devotions you are guided to use by the Holy Spirit.

1

Picture our Lord's return to Nazareth. It was quiet, immediate, unquestioning. Such was His submission. Ask yourself if your submission to the loving will of the Father is quiet, immediate, and unquestioning. Tell God of your desire to be His loving child.

'I will pour all my will into Thine, O Lord. May Thy will be done by me in time and in eternity. Conform me, O sweet Jesu, to Thy holy life; teach, direct, and help me in all

things so that I may do nothing, speak nothing, think nothing but what is pleasing to Thee.'

Consider the life which our Lord lived in Nazareth. In the first place we may infer that He was a carpenter by trade. 'Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary?' Among the Jews it was a religious duty to learn some trade. Imagine how our Lord laboured with His hands. Think of how it affected His after life. 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me.' What is your attitude towards your work? Can you regard it as sent from God? Do you work as He worked? Consider your work in the light of our Lord's work.

'O most sweet Child, Thou didst labour to increase in wisdom and in favour with God. I, too, desire to press forward and pass from a dull and tepid life to one in which I may truly work for Thee. Grant me Thy blessing, and so shall I go from strength to strength until my work here on earth shall be one with Thy work in heaven.'

II

Consider the humility of Christ in being hid from the world for most of His life. Is yours a life hid with Christ in God? Consider His submission to His Mother and to S. Joseph. What is your attitude towards your parents? Consider His thirty years' silence, and contrast it with your babblings and gossiping and vain boasting about self and the things of self. Con-

sider that this Youth was the Word and Wisdom of God. Consider all your foolishness.

'O wondrous humility of Christ, what a reproof art Thou to my pride and vanity! Thou, O Lord, Who wast the eternal Wisdom, didst yet lie hidden and wast silent for thirty years; and I, so foolish, am forward to speak idle things and to appear before men. Teach me the way of true humility, and let me ever follow in Thy footsteps.'

III

Consider how our Lord loved nature. On His walks often He must have noted the lilies of the field, the hen gathering her chickens under her wing, the sparrows on the house-top. Often He had watched the labourers in the vineyards, the sower going forth to sow, and marked the tares growing up among the wheat. From His place on the lonely hill-top He noted the red blur of the fox as it leaped to its hole and watched the fowls of the air seeking their nests. Give thanks to God for His creation of nature. 'O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him for ever.'

IV

Our Lord loved not only nature but the busy haunts of men. The play in the market, the marriage procession, the funeral rites, the harshness of the creditor, the unjust judges, the greed of the tax-gatherers—all these scenes lived in

His mind. Pray for those about you. Resolve to love your neighbour more.

'Draw thou toward Him as many as thou canst and say to them, Come, let us love Him, come, let us love Him ; for He made all and He is not far from us.'

Our Lord in His hidden life in Nazareth learned to hate sin but love the sinner. He did not quench the dimly burning flax. He did not break the bruised reed. On the smouldering flax He breathed His Holy Spirit and blew it into a flame of love. Of the broken reed He fashioned a little shepherd's pipe on which He played a merry tune and, as the true Orpheus, charmed the souls of men and drew them after Him. Ask God to fire your torpid soul with the furnace of His love. Beseech Him to take the bruised and marred remains of your life and transform them into an instrument to His glory.

'Do unto me, O Lord, whatever is well-pleasing in Thine eyes. Only take me and make me wholly Thine, for my heart is restless till it rest in Thee.'

V

In Nazareth, too, our Lord learned many of the prevalent ideals of His people. He learned of the ideal of the kingdom as not of this world. He pondered on the dreamy thoughts of the apocalyptic literature which sought to read the mysteries of the coming of the kingdom. He

pondered the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Not one jot or tittle was to fall to the ground till all was fulfilled. All the aspirations of the Psalms, all the utterances of the prophets, all the Law of Moses, was intimately familiar to Him. Above all the Messianic prophecies, the Ideal of the Suffering Servant, the vision of the kingdom of God, became the light and centre of His life.

'O Divine Wisdom, Who proceedest out of the mouth of the Most High, Whose kingdom is not of this world, bestow upon Thy servant such love that I may be glad to follow Thee wheresoever Thou leadest in the paths of love and of suffering.'

His inner converse with God, the merging of His human mind with His divine mind, we cannot venture to portray. All we can do is to remember that His was a perfect humanity. His mind knew what a perfect human mind could know. He 'increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.'

'I will sing unto Thy Name, for Thou art the most beautiful of the sons of men. When Thou art my strength I have strength indeed. O bestow upon me Thy wisdom, and then shall I too increase in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and with man.'

XII

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

Read S. Matthew iii. 13–17, and S. Luke iii. 21–23.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

PLACE yourself consciously in the presence of God. 'O heavenly King, Who so dwellest in Thy kingdom that Thou art present in every part of it, grant that I may live always in Thy presence and serve Thee with all my heart and with all my mind and with all my strength.' Ask for the guidance of the Holy Ghost. 'Guide me and govern me, O gentle Spirit. Let me not guide myself nor let the world or the flesh govern me.' Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and the *Hail Mary*.

I

Hearken to the cry of the Baptist, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' The expectation of the coming of the Messiah is at its height. The cry is raised not far from Jerusalem. Pharisee and Sadducee flock to hear the Baptist. The strange appearance of John commands the respect of all men, and his

character accords with his appearance. His coarse raiment is bound with a leathern belt. Locusts and wild honey is his food. The man himself is so true and strong—not 'a reed shaken by the wind,' not self-seeking, but humble, pointing away from himself to One that is to come. For himself he seeks nothing. He has but one message, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

'Fill me, O Lord, more and more with the Holy Spirit, that being led by Him I may long more and more for the coming of Thy kingdom within me. Thy kingdom come, O Lord, Thy will be done.'

II

When our Lord heard of the preaching of John, He knew that the message was from the Father. He knew He must 'be about His Father's business.' He hastens to meet John. S. Luke tells us that when all the people had been baptized, Jesus came to meet John. When they met, John was so overwhelmed that he hesitated to give Him baptism. All John could think of was that he stood in the presence of One the latchet of Whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose.

'I, too, O Lord, am not worthy to stoop down and unloose Thy shoes. I have sinned and am not worthy to crouch at Thy feet. I will nothing, I desire nothing, but to suffer and be despised for Thy sake. I would rather be

a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.'

Listen to the words of the Lord. 'Suffer it to be so now : for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.'

Are you seeking to fulfil all righteousness ? Your Lord, though He was sinless, sought the baptism of repentance. He hungered after righteousness, and in pursuit of conformity to the will of the Father asked for baptism of John.

The first step in the quest after righteousness is the putting away of sin. For the remission of mortal sin in those who have been instructed in the Faith, the Church requires auricular confession. An act of mortal sin is the wilful commission of a grievous sin with full knowledge. It must be the act of your will. An idiot is incapable of committing mortal sin. It must be grievous matter. To be sure, any sin, however small, is most lamentable ; but our Lord Himself distinguishes between sins which are punishable with few stripes and those which are deserving of many. S. John speaks of 'a sin unto death and a sin not unto death.' Certain acts are so terrible that they cut the soul off from God, and a soul committing such a sin is not able unaided to excite contrition sufficient for forgiveness. It needs the shame attendant upon confession to another to become truly contrite.

Again, you must have full knowledge of the

act. If you misunderstood what was involved you would not be fully responsible.

Have you mortal sin on your soul? If so hasten to fulfil all righteousness. Make your confession.

III

But the Sacrament of Absolution may be used also in the case of venial sin. An act of venial sin is one in which any one, or more, of the three marks of a mortal sin is missing. It may not be grievous matter (though note that if you conscientiously thought it grievous matter it would be such for you, for you would be sinning against the light). It may not have been done with full knowledge of what was involved (indeed few acts of yours are fully understood). But if you are desirous of fulfilling all righteousness, you will be longing for all the grace of God which you may receive. Absolution is a tonic as well as a remedy for sin. Consider some of the reasons for bringing venial sin to Absolution.

The confessional is the remedy for sloth. You may say you confess to God in private. *Do you?* It is so hard by oneself to rise up against sloth, and to persevere in penitence. It is easy to begin a life of penitence but very hard to persevere in contrition. The self-examination which a regular and frequent confession entails is a safeguard against slothfulness in sorrow for sin. Are you persevering in penitence?

'Oh, how great is my folly and sloth. I

have lost much time which might have been given to penitence. I have cast away Thy grace. I have turned a deaf ear to Thy voice calling me. I resolve to persevere in penitence.'

In the confessional one learns the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The soul which perseveres in confession comes to realize what a terrible thing sin is. As a soul grows in holiness, so it grows in sensitiveness to sin. To the saints the very least sin was a ghastly act of treachery. To our Lord, the Perfect Man, sin was an unspeakable horror. Do you treat your sins lightly, casually, indifferently? Such an attitude towards sin is far from the hunger after righteousness which led Jesus to His baptism. Confess your least sins regularly and faithfully, and they will appear loathsome to you.

'Now do I begin to live, O Lord, for I see the horror of my sin. Woe is me that I have been so indifferent to the sin which crucified Thee. But Thou, O Lord, hast rescued me from the jaws of hell.'

IV

The confessional is the place to learn not only the horror of sin, but how to deal with sin. So much time is wasted in dealing with surface sins only. What is the root sin which breeds these weeds and nettles? You may not know. It is hard to recognize just what form of self and self-will besets you. But a skilful physician of the soul can diagnose your case for you.

Things which had seemed important to you perhaps are not so weighty. Perhaps you have confessed to gossip, lies, impatience, anger. These are important. But the self-will which leads to these surface sins is more important. Root out self-seeking and the surface sins will die. In these matters, and a thousand other more important details, confession to a wise director is of great value.

'Show me, O Lord, my sin that I may repent. Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness. According to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences.'

V

Confession and Absolution is the way of happiness. You cannot be happy while there is sin on your soul, for sin is the gulf fixed between you and your Lord. In Jesus is joy. What is there which separates you from Jesus? *What are the things which you cannot forget?* Confess them, and you will share in the joy of heaven when one sinner repents. 'O Saviour most dear to me, give me the joy of perfect union with Thee.'

Confession is the way of peace. 'In His will is our peace.' What is there of self-will in your life which walls out the peace of God which passeth understanding? 'Lord, give me Thy heart.'

Confession is the way of holiness without which you cannot see the Son of God. Only

the pure in heart see God. Wherein is your heart not pure, not like unto the Sacred Heart of Jesus? 'Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy upon me.'

'Lord, wash me more and more. Create in me a new heart. Let not the foot of pride come near me. For Thy glory will I confess my sins unto Thee, I will consider my sins and confess them to Thy priest, and so shall I love Thee and hunger more and more for Thy righteousness. So shall I, too, rising out of the water of repentance, hear Thy voice, saying unto me, "This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."'

XIII

THE TEMPTATION OF OUR LORD

Read S. Matthew iv. 1–11.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

THINK of the presence of God. 'Whither then shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither then shall I go from Thy presence? If I climb up into heaven Thou art there, and if I go down into hell Thou art there also.' Make an act of desire for God. 'My soul thirsteth for Thee, O God; my flesh also longeth after Thee.' Say the usual opening prayers.

1

'Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.' Consider the words 'of the Spirit.' It was the will of God that He should be tempted. The three assaults of the devil were directed against our Lord's absolute submission to the will of the Father. In the will of God is all holiness and all perfection. Christ came into the world to do the Father's will, to make the perfect

oblation, to undo the work of man's disobedience. If He submitted to the Father's will, it would mean endless suffering. The Father was not pleased with the suffering in itself but rather with an oblation of self which was willing to suffer to the condemnation as a malefactor, to the rejection by His people, to the death of the Cross.

Here in the barren desert, hungry and athirst, beaten about by temptation, His powers reduced to faintness, Jesus realized all that His obedience required. The *if* of Satan was not a doubt but a taunt. He was God, and yet His human will must be conformed to the divine will. This is the meaning of the temptation—to refuse His absolute conformity to the will of God.

See the Saviour, alone in the desert, faint with hunger, wearied by this inward temptation. He must submit absolutely to the will of the Father. Can this be the will of God? Only a word and the stones will be bread. But such an act would be to shatter the moral value of His obedience and substitute magic for religion. His great mission was to do the will of the Father, to make a perfect oblation. It was for this that the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.

Our Lord submits to the will of God. He does not change the circumstances of His life. To have done so would have been despair. But He trusts the action of the Spirit and the will of

God. Mere power alone will bring no one into the kingdom of God. Only by submission to the will of God will you find power.

Do not let Satan tempt you by saying you must strengthen your will by having your own way. Self-will can never give power. Only in the will of God is power and peace. How is it with your soul ?

' Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding that I may keep Thy law, yea I shall keep it with my whole heart. Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein is my desire. Behold, my delight is in Thy commandments.'

II

The Spirit of God had led our Lord into the desert. Satan now carried Him to Jerusalem and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple. The first temptation had taken place in the grey of the morning. Now our Lord stands on the tower of the Temple where the priests watch the silver dawn stealing over the land. In the Temple He saw the morning sacrifice offered. Now was the moment for Him to descend and proclaim Himself the King of the Jews. But no ! This is not the way of the Spirit ; this is not the will of God.

The will of God was all important to Jesus. Is it all important to you ? ' I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy commandments. My delight shall be in Thy commandments, which

I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto Thy commandments, which I have loved; and my study shall be in Thy statutes.'

III

The scene changes to the top of a high mountain. Below lay all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. All this would Satan give Him if He would but fall down and worship Satan. But there are no short cuts to the kingdom of God. You are not to do evil, vainly thinking that good will come of it. 'Then said Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' The end of doing the will of God is that we may worship God.

'Thou art my portion, O Lord, I have promised to keep Thy law. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee. The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy. O teach me Thy statutes.'

'Then the devil leaveth Him.' Resisted and defeated, Satan flees away. Our Lord is triumphant, for He has not yielded His will. Temptation, no matter how fierce or how long or how insidious, is not sin. Sin enters only when the consent of the will is given. Your temptations, like our Lord's, may grow, they may last a lifetime, they may shift with Satan's craft ; but if you do not give the consent of your will, there is no sin. Temptation in itself

is not sin. Thank God for temptations resisted. Say the *Gloria Patri.*

IV

Temptation is good for the soul, for by temptation the soul is tried. Sin is death to the soul. But temptation resisted draws the soul nearer to God. The soul must be exercised, and one of the ways is by the fiery trials of temptation. So 'count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.' Think of your besetting temptations, and see how by resisting them you are being brought nearer to God. Thank God for your temptations (not for your sins, God forbid !). Say the *Gloria Patri.*

'And behold angels came and ministered unto Him.' Perhaps you have noticed that whenever you have done the will of God, there has always come a sweetness, a reward, perhaps quite undreamed of. This is the ministration of the angels, the courtesy of God. Recall past experiences. Visualize the trial with its temptations. But you did the will of God, just for God's sweet sake. And then suddenly, quite unexpectedly, came the reward, God's courtesy. Angels came and ministered unto you. Thank God for His courtesies.

The roar of the world is in my ears.
Thank God for the roar of the world !
Thank God for the mighty tide of fears
Against me always hurled !

Thank God for the bitter and ceaseless strife
And the sting of His chastening rod,
Thank God for the stress and pain of life ;
And oh, thank God for God. [1]

[1] Joyce Kilmer.

XIV

THE FIRST MIRACLE

Read S. John ii. 1–11.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

MAKE an act of faith. 'My God, I believe in Thee and in all Thy Church doth teach, because Thy word hath said it and Thy word is true.'

Make an act of desire for God. 'I am Thy servant, O Lord; give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments.' Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and the Collect for Pentecost.

'God, Who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.'

1

Picture the scene. Make an act of patience if it is hard work. The harder the better, for you

do not make a meditation to please self but to please God.

'Grant, O Lord, that I may ever strive after Thee and not be overcome by sloth or desire to please self. If Thy will sends me dryness of spirit I will rejoice as having received the sweetness of Thee. For dryness of spirit sent from Thee is better than a thousand favours from Satan. In Thee do I rejoice, O Lord my God.'

Then turn your thoughts to far-off Cana. It lies a few miles north-east of Nazareth, on the slope of a hill, terrace rising upon terrace. In the pleasant gardens is the house, adorned for the marriage festivities. In the gallery stand the huge water-pots for the washing of hands both before and after eating. Enter the large dining-room, brilliantly illuminated. See the guests reclining on couches around the table. The banquet is proceeding in joy and happiness just as a marriage festivity always does. Ask God to bless all marriages.

II

Now comes the awkward moment when the wine fails. 'And when they wanted wine the Mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine.'

Here is the ideal of prayer. Mary had learned such confidence in her Son that she turns to Him in the hour of need and simply states the fact with sure trust in Him and without the slightest suggestion as to the remedy.

So often in your prayers you tend to dictate to God how He is to answer your prayer, how He is to supply your need. That is not the way of faith. A real venture of faith means absolute submission to His will.

'It is by no means enough to set out cheerfully with your God on any venture of faith. Tear into smallest pieces any itinerary for the journey which your imagination may have drawn up. Nothing will turn out as you expect. Your guide will keep to no beaten path. He will lead you by a way such as you never dreamed your eyes would look upon. He knows no fear and expects you to fear nothing while He is with you. The clinging hand of His child makes a desperate situation a delight to Him. It is your business to be peaceful and safe in God in every situation. To take you to His end by the way you know would prove for you but little. He chooses for you a way you know not, that you may be compelled into a thousand intercourses with Himself, which will make the journey for ever memorable to Him and to you. Difficulty is the very atmosphere of miracle. It is miracle in its first stage. If it is to be a great miracle, the condition is not difficulty but impossibility.'

Is there need in your life? Take your need confidently to Jesus. Simply state the case as Blessed Mary did, confident in His wisdom and power. But do not dictate to God how He should act. 'May His will be done.'

III

Listen to our Lord speaking to the servants. 'Fill the water-pots with water.' Note how our Lord uses sacramental means to convey His power. When He heals the blind, He uses clay; when He feeds thousands, He employs the loaves and fishes. He commands water for Baptism and bread and wine for Holy Communion. God is always acting through sacraments and sacramental means. Have you recourse to all the Sacraments and to all sacramentals? Do you treat all life as sacramental, as a means of bringing you to God? Does the sight of a tree lift your heart to the Tree of the Cross? Do you regard wakefulness at night as a call from God to speak to Him? Does sorrow or trouble lift your heart to Him Who bore all your sorrows and carried all your sicknesses? All things material and moral may be sacramentals, channels of the love of God.

'O Saviour of the world, Who by Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us, save me and help me, O Lord.'

IV

'They filled them to the brim.' It is reasonable to think that if the servants had only half filled the water-pots, only half the wine would have been supplied. God will do great things for you if you will have great desires. It is as easy for God to do great things for you as to do

little. Nothing is little in the sight of God, because nothing is great to God. Is your desire for God and your expectation of God great or small? If you expect great things, He will do great things for you. How much of God do you want in your life? And how much of your life are you giving to God? He can do but little for you if you give Him but little with which to work. Fill the water-pot of your soul full with the water of your desire for God and He will transform it into the wine of His love.

'Empty my heart of things created and fill me with the sweet wine of Thy love. Blood of Christ refresh me.'

v

'Draw out now.' If you act too soon you may find that God has not had time to change the water of your longing into the wine of His love. You must be content to wait on God's time. Delay! How very hard it is to wait on God! But you must learn to let God act in His own way and in His own time. The Holy Spirit never hurries. You cannot hurry God. You must relax on your cross as if it were the sweet bed of your soul, as if it were the one thing above all else which you desired. Say to yourself that perhaps you in your foolishness thought you wanted something else. What you really wanted was just this cross; it may be the cross of delay. God is slow to act and you must learn calmness, tranquillity, patience.

'I offer myself to Thee, O Lord, to suffer all things with a quiet mind, tranquilly, cheerfully, and without any impatience or any complaint. I know that Thy judgements are right and that Thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled.'

VI

'Thou hast kept the good wine until now.' No doubt in the past you experienced great favours from God. But the love of God is inexhaustible. Men are mistaken when they think they know all of the love of God. One of love's wonders is that with each draught of the wine of His love comes fresh conviction that He has kept the good wine until now. Each revelation of His love is more wonderful than the last. And there is no limit to the ocean of His love. Oceans may not contain His love, far less six water-pots of stone. Then seek new draughts of the wine of His love. Offer, not six water-pots of stone for His filling, but your whole life.

XV

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

Read S. John ii. 13–25.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

RECALL the fact of the presence of God. Perhaps you cannot have a feeling of the presence of God, but you know His presence to be a *fact.* You are intimately present to Him, with all your faults and failings and selfishness. In His presence you find strength and power. Say three times, 'In Thy presence is the fullness of joy.' Repeat the opening devotions.

I

Picture to yourself the cleansing of the Temple. See the confused scenes around the noisy tables of an Eastern money-changer, the careful weighing of the coins, the arguing, the disputing, the bargaining. Truly they had made the house of the Lord into a place of traffic.

Then, too, there were those 'that sold oxen and sheep and doves,' and those who could in-

form as to the proper meat and drink offering. Some might bring their own animals for the sacrifice and these had to be examined as to their qualifications. Disputes would arise over these examinations. The poor would be robbed. All this traffic, money-changing, selling of doves, examination of sacrifices, was a desecration.

See our Lord coming into the Temple courts. Again He is about His Father's business. The first step is to cleanse the house of His heavenly Father. See His eyes blazing with righteous wrath. He makes a scourge of small cords and drives them all out of the Temple. He pours out the money, overthrows the tables, and says, 'Take these things hence; make not My Father's house a house of merchandise.'

Perhaps there were some who saw Him as Man cleansing His Father's house who had heard Him as Boy say that He must be about His Father's business. That business was to occupy but three years, while the preparation lasted from the Finding in the Temple to the Cleansing of the Temple. Say the *Our Father*, asking for grace to do your Father's business.

II

'He spake of the temple of His Body.' Consider your bodily preparation for Holy Communion. There is a certain physical preparation which is necessary. If you were bidden to a royal dinner, how carefully would you prepare! In Holy Communion you are bidden

to the heavenly Banquet, to dine with the King of kings at the Table of the Lord. Surely your preparation will be no less. Attendance at Holy Communion requires a dress that is fitting to the occasion.

Then there is the element of physical preparation involved in fasting. From the very earliest days it has been the rule of the Church to receive Holy Communion as the first food of the day, fasting from all food and drink from midnight. Such is the rule. But the spiritual reasons behind the physical act are obvious. Fasting before Communion is an act of reverence ; it is an act of self-denial which has the value of an act of sacrifice and of self-discipline. Then, too, food dulls the senses, and to receive Holy Communion after a meal is to receive in a less responsive state than when fasting.

Are you careful about your physical preparation ? Do you study to avoid a sense of rush and hurry in preparation for Mass ? Are your prayers said with recollection ? Make an act of contrition for any failure to cleanse the temple of your body properly for Communion. ' Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy upon me.'

III

Such is the physical preparation. But there is also the spiritual preparation. You have thought in a previous meditation of the value of frequent confession in keeping your soul in a state of grace ; think here of your habitual

preparation which results from your living constantly a life of recollection in the presence of God. Your whole life should be shaped and dominated by the fact of your next communion. Behind your work and play, your relaxations and duties, should be the thought of your next meeting with your Lord. Every thanksgiving should be a preparation for your next communion, every preparation a thanksgiving for your last. So your whole life will be illuminated by the thought of His presence.

'O Lord, Thou hast searched me out and known me; Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed; and spiest out all my ways. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether. Whither, then, shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I go from Thy presence?'

IV

But even though you are in a state of grace and are recollected in the presence of God, you will want, before you go to meet your Lord, further positive preparation in the way of special prayers for love and a spirit of abandonment to the divine will. Preparation is not negative only, in the way of avoiding sin; preparation is not general only, in keeping in a state of recollection: preparation is special and positive. Your religion is sacramental and says that whatever

you would do generally you must do specially. The man who prays in 'God's great outdoors' is probably the man who goes to Mass. So you will want special prayers before Communion. You can find these in any devotional manual. They are best said in church just before Mass. And many are the times when you will want to lay aside the book of prayers and simply and lovingly raise your heart to Him Who is coming. 'Jesus is coming' is your thought, and

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee,

should be the burden of your prayer. Say this aspiration now.

V

'When He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.'

Our Lord must have said many other things unto His disciples which fell on barren ground at the time of their utterance. How much have you also missed of messages from our Lord by your hardness of hearing and dullness of understanding? Then open your ears and enlarge your heart that hearing you may hear and understand the wonders of the love of God for you. The things you have missed by your sloth and dullness of heart! Resolve to wait upon your God and hearken to His every word and suggestion.

'I beseech Thee, O Lord, to grant to my heart to desire Thee; that desiring Thee I may seek Thee, and that seeking Thee I may find Thee, and that finding Thee I may love Thee. For Thou hast desired me and sought me and found me and loved me. Come, Lord Jesus, and dwell in my heart in the fullness of Thy strength, in the perfection of Thy ways, and in the holiness of Thy Spirit. Come, and Thou wilt find my soul a mansion prepared for Thee.'

XVI

THE BEATITUDES

Read S. Matthew v. 1–12,

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

BE very quiet and listen for the voice of God the Holy Spirit. Say the *Veni Creator*. Make an act of faith, saying, ' O Son of God, I believe that for my salvation Thou didst take upon Thee my human nature. I believe that Thou didst suffer and die upon the Cross for me. I believe that Thou, God and Man, art present in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. I believe that the Church is Thy mystical Body, and whatsoever Thy Church doth teach I believe, and believing I adore Thee and love Thee more.' Say the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary*.

1

Picture the scene of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus had spent the night in prayer on a lonely mountain. As the soft morning broke He called to Him the Twelve. But they were not alone. Already the multitude had followed to a broad, level plateau below. To

them He spoke words of life and of love. As they pressed upon Him, He retired again to the mount ; and there in the bright clear day He spoke the words known as the Sermon on the Mount. Place yourself in spirit among those who stand looking upon Him, more beautiful than all the sons of men. In their hearts was desire and expectation. Do you, too, fill your heart with desire and love for Jesus !

' Come, my Joy, the Light of mine eyes ; come, my Love, Thou Light incomprehensible, and fill the powers of my soul that I may see nothing but Thee, and think on and love nothing but Thee, and desire nothing but Thee. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'

II

Remind yourself once more why our Lord came into the world. He did not come to found a new philosophical system nor to teach morality nor to set an example. He came to bring life. Because He loved you He has brought you love and light and life. Give thanks to God for His love.

Our Lord came not to set an example or to inaugurate a new philosophy or to enact a new set of commandments. Much modern religion tends more and more to dispense with the grace which the Lord won for us and substitutes Him as an ideal to be imitated. If you ask why you should imitate this life, it is answered because His was the best life ever lived. That

is perfectly true. But if you believe that Christ lived and died and lives again to bring you life ; and if you ask what will happen if you ignore His offer of eternal life, the answer is equally plain—you will die. Assure Jesus you will do your part in laying hold on His grace.

' In Thee, O Lord, is the fullness of life. By Thy grace imparted to me through the Sacraments will I be saved from death unto life eternal.'

III

Consider, then, the Beatitudes. They have sometimes been regarded as the Ten Commandments of the New Testament. But such a comparison is very misleading. There is no command to be peacemakers. Our Lord commends the soul that is peaceful. It would be pathetic misunderstanding of the mission of Christ to try to acquire the virtue of peacemaking by refraining from acts of violence. Peace is a virtue which follows from union with our Lord. He did not come to enact a new set of commandments ; He came to offer a union with Him, the natural result of which is meekness and mercifulness and purity of heart.

Purity, again, is not a negative virtue. Our Lord does not command purity, and you do not become pure by abstaining from acts of impurity. Such a negative form of purity is only another form of the sin of smugness, of self-satisfaction, of self-righteousness, of self-will

which is far from the blessedness which is said of the pure in heart who see God. Ask Jesus for such union with Him that you will be meek and merciful and pure and peace-loving.

IV

What, then, is the meaning of the Beatitudes, if they are not commandments and rules of morality? They commend a soul which is in union and fellowship with our Lord. Jesus did not come to enact a new set of rules; He came to offer you a life of fellowship with Himself, and in that union to bestow comfort, peace, purity, and power. If you regard the Beatitudes as rules, you will have some difficulty in finding opportunity for fulfilling them. Our Lord does not lay down a principle and ask you to find examples of its application. His method is rather the opposite. He gives you in the Beatitudes examples and bids you work out the principle. The Beatitudes are not rules but particular instances to which you must find the general principle.

The principle which you must discover for yourself is the life of Christ, the life of the Christ within you. Jesus has given you in the Beatitudes, not principles of your life, but examples of the ideal life which is hid in Him. That life cannot be defined more than to say that it is in Him and He is in you. You must take the Beatitudes as inspiring examples of the Christian life, and experience that life for

yourself. You must know for yourself the joy and peace and purity which flow from a life hid in Him.

The Beatitudes, then, commend a state of soul, a type of character, which is the ideal Christian character. They commend a life in union with God which issue in states of purity and meekness and peace. Our Lord did not come to reveal new rules and commandments ; He came to reveal *Himself*. If you are in union with Him your life will be like His. It is imparted love, love which results not from any meticulous keeping of rule but which is His to bestow and yours to receive. You will never become meek by trying to be meek, nor merciful by trying to be merciful, nor pure by trying to be pure. But if your life is one with His, you will be found merciful and meek and pure. You are to labour not to keep a rule but to be in union with Him, to let Him live and rule in you, to be one with Him. A humility which is consciously practised is pride and far from the natural spontaneous virtue which flows from union with God. Make an act of desire and union with Jesus.

'This only do I seek and this only do I desire, that I may be made one with Thee, very Life and very Love, my Lord.'

V

This does not mean that there is no need for rule in your life. Our Lord came not to des-

troy but to fulfil. He Himself kept rules, and you must keep rules. What He does want you to realize is that you must constantly, in the keeping of rule, refer your life to His. His love is the standard by which you are to measure your life. He wants you to lead a positive life, not a negative one. Your preparation for Holy Communion should be more than a refraining from mortal sin. It should be a hunger and thirst after God. You should measure life not by what you have left undone, but by what you have achieved in union with Jesus.

This is no easy task. You are to expect persecution and all manner of evil being said against you falsely for the sake of the Son of God. But you are to rejoice and be exceeding glad. You are to see in the very difficulty of the task and the storm of persecution a new opportunity for yielding yourself to Jesus. Our Lord is the Source of all power and energy and strength. As you give yourself more and more to Him you will find new sources of power and energy and strength not yours but His, for it is not you that is living but Christ Jesus living in you. And in the power of that union with Him you will find patience and mercy and purity and love and truth.

Are you tempted to impurity? Seek closer union with Jesus in Holy Communion, and you will find the positive purity of seeing God. Are you tempted to tell lies? Seek Jesus Who is Truth. Are you tempted to impatience? In-

crease your union with Him Who is Love. Virtue is an achievement, but not in your own power. Virtue flows from union with God. What you must strive for is oneness with Jesus. Give yourself to Him. 'My God and my All.'

XVII

THE WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER

Read S. Luke vii. 36–50.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

THINK of the presence of God. 'O Thou Ruler of my life, Who art nearer to me than I am to myself, I am nothing, I can do nothing without Thee. Then manifest Thyself to me more and more, and so shall I love Thee more.' Make an act of love. 'Give me, O Lord, a quiet mind and kindle in me a holy love.' Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, saying the *Veni Creator*. Say the *Our Father*. Make an act of desire for God. 'Empty my heart of every created thing. Make me pure and simple and wholly fixed on Thee, that I may regard nothing and love nothing but Thee.'

I

Picture the scene. Jesus has gone to the house of Simon the Pharisee to dine. All are lying around the table, which is decked with splendid dishes and luxurious food. There

comes into the room a woman that was a sinner. Recall the Jewish prejudice against any conversation with such a woman.

But to Mary Magdalene there is nothing incongruous. All she thought of was that Jesus loved her. He had said, 'Come unto Me.' What else mattered? Jesus loved her and had called her to come to Him. She would go and find rest.

See her as she stands at His feet. The Pharisee and his friends are dumb with horror. She brings with her an alabaster box of ointment. She stands behind Him; and as she bends over to anoint Him, her tears bathe His feet. As if ashamed to defile Him with her tears, she wipes them away with the long tresses of her hair. And now her faith grows bold, and she kisses the feet which had brought her glad tidings of peace. She does not speak, nor does He. Heart speaks with heart. Add your act of love to that of the Magdalene.

'Set my heart on fire with love of Thee, for the fire of Thy Sacred Heart is always blazing with love for me.'

II

Simon was scandalized. He says to himself that if Jesus were a prophet He would have known what this woman was and would not have permitted her to come near Him. Jesus does know. But He loves sinners, just as He hates sin. He is the Saviour of sinners;

so she may weep over His feet and kiss and anoint them. Make an act of loving contrition.

'Woe is me that I have not loved Thee; for if I loved Thee truly I would always have Thee in my heart.'

Jesus then reasons with Simon according to the usual mode of thought among the Pharisees. He would love most to whom most was forgiven. Let Simon apply the reasoning to his own action. To wash the feet of a guest, to give him the kiss of greeting, to anoint him was not necessary at a feast. All the more did it convey respect and affection. Simon had omitted these attentions of respect. To Simon He says, 'Thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.'

III

Consider that Mary would not have found Jesus unless He first came to her. So often we err in thinking that our prayer, our faith, our love, our repentance, begins in ourselves. 'We love Him because He first loved us,' applies not only to love but to all virtues.

It is God Who takes the initiative. 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Perhaps you are not yet a loving penitent. But Christ is ever seeking your soul, calling you to Him, promising forgiveness and rest. Love springs from God and flows to you. God takes the initiative, but you must do your part. God cannot save you against your will. He can offer you the grace of repentance, but He cannot force you to come to Him. Then of your own free will go to your heavenly Father and cry, 'Father, I have sinned against Thee.' And the answer will come, 'Go in peace. Thy sins are forgiven.'

IV

'She loved much.' It was not hard for Mary Magdalene to go to our Lord, for her love was so great. She was not bewildered or embarrassed in the house of Simon. She had no problems. She simply loved. From the time she saw our Lord and heard His call, life to her was simply love. Therefore she did not stop to reason about the propriety of going into a strange man's house uninvited. All she thought of was love. There were no problems, for 'she loved much.'

This is the ideal of life, so to love our Lord that nothing else matters. Think of the main problems and perplexities and worries of your life. Consider how they vanish as mists before the rising sun when you love and put all your

energies to love more. Think of the time you are wasting when you might be loving our Lord. Resolve to love Him more.

V

That scene in the house of Simon marks the beginning of her love, not the end. For true love is never satisfied, always longing more and more to give itself and to pour itself over the Beloved. Imagine how her love grew as she followed our Lord in His ministry and through His Passion. We cannot think of the Magdalene sparing herself in her following of her Lord in His Passion. One is sure she did not think of herself but only of Him as she followed the cruel way of the Cross. There came a time when again she was at His feet and she could not kiss them or anoint them or wash them with her tears. For those feet were wet not with ointment but with His own Blood, and rested not on a couch but on the cruel bed of the Cross. Yet just as it was not the nails which held Him there, but His great love, so it was His great love which supported her at the foot of the Cross. But she thought not of herself but of Him.

That is the end of life—so to lose yourself in love for your Lord that you think only of Him. So often you fail in your love when it comes to the Cross. So often you think of yourself. But that is self-pity, not love. You

are so to love that you lose thought of everything but that you love Him and want to love Him more. It is more blessed to give than to receive. It is more loving to love than to be loved. Then make your act of love to Jesus.

XVIII

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Read S. Matthew xiii. 44–46.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

SAY the usual opening prayers. Make an act of desire for Jesus. 'Enter, I pray Thee, the inmost sanctuary of my heart, and stamp thereon Thy lovely and wonderful likeness, that I may rest in the sweetness of Thy presence.'

I

Consider the parable of the pearl of great price. A merchantman is seeking pearls. He finds one that is so lovely, so beautiful, so compelling in its charm, that he sells all his other pearls to possess the one pearl lovelier than all the rest. The merchantman who found the great treasure did the same thing. For the joy of possessing the treasure he sells all that he owns to buy the field in which the treasure lay hid.

It is a parable of your religion. The Catholic Faith is a matter of revelation from God. But you may also approach it in an apologetical manner. What is it which all men desire? It is

happiness. All men everywhere, at all times, have sought for happiness. Many are the theories of happiness. All nations and peoples have desired happiness.

God is perfect happiness. To be with God is joy everlasting. It is the very nature of God to will happiness for His children. The happiness of man is the glory of God. God is magnified in the joy of His people.

God has not created you and left you without means of finding happiness. He has provided for the happiness of His children. Whatever system in the long run makes for the greatest amount of happiness is the true religion. God is and wills happiness, and the religion which *in the long run* bears the greatest fruit of happiness is the true religion.

It is purely a matter of fact. What religion as a matter of history has brought the maximum of happiness to the hearts of men? Search history and the lives of men and you will find that the Catholic religion, despite its many failures, has offered the greatest sum of happiness.

'Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.'

Why did our Lord curse the fig tree? Because it should have borne fruit. It brought no fruit to perfection, but only put forth showy leaves and so was cursed as worthless. 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.'

The fruit of the Spirit is joy. The system which bears the most fruit of joy to the glory of God is the true system. Facts show that it is the Catholic Faith which bears the most fruit of joy.

II

It is not for the joy that the pearl is bought but for the sake of the pearl. The merchantman wants to possess the pearl. The joy flows from the possession of the pearl.

Even so it is not for the sake of happiness that you choose the Catholic Faith and Jesus Christ. You want to possess Jesus. You know that the fruit of possessing Jesus will be happiness, but you choose the Catholic Faith not for the sake of the happiness but for the sake of possessing Jesus. Make an act of joy for possessing Jesus.

'Come, my Lord, my Love, my Joy, and make no long tarrying, for I desire Thee with great joy. Be Thou my happiness and my great reward.'

III

'He went and sold all that he had.' To possess the pearl of great price the merchant-

man willingly and joyfully sold all that he had.

To possess the joy of Jesus you must willingly and joyfully sell all that you have. Our Lord went to His Passion willingly and joyfully. He went willingly. The Father was pleased not by the suffering of the Passion but by a voluntary offering of His will. You must be glad to accept the will of the Father. Do you do the divine will grudgingly or joyfully? The Cross is the glad and voluntary acceptance of the Father's will. It must be assumed. If you obey grudgingly you will never find the joy of Jesus. 'Thy will, not Mine, be done.'

And Jesus went joyfully to His Cross. 'Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross.' Just to bear with the pain and hardships of this life will not bring you joy. You must accept your cross joyfully, as if it were the happiest thing in the world, the one thing that your soul craved. Perhaps you have thought something else would make you happy. You were wrong. The thing you really wanted was the Cross.

Our Lord is joy and happiness incarnate, and to possess Him means joy and happiness. He does destroy some things that are considered joys, the aimless expenditure of energy. But the merchantman knew exactly what he wanted. The possession of the pearl would be a greater joy than that of all the other possessions put together. Say the *Gloria Patri*.

IV

You must give all to receive All. The joys of possessing Jesus outweigh all other joys. It does not mean that other joys are wrong. It means that if you have Him you can do without other joys.

Perhaps you were one day walking down the street on a glorious autumn day. You feasted your eyes on the riot of colour about you. The trees were ablaze with joy. In the background rose a Gothic tower, grey with age. Then you saw a loved one coming down the street. All the rapture of nature and of soaring spire were forgotten in the joy of seeing your friend.

The merchantman could still enjoy pearls of lesser price. But in the joy of possessing the great pearl all else was forgotten. In the joy of Jesus all other joys fade away.

But there is the price to pay. The merchantman sold all that he had. Have you given all to Jesus? What have you held back? You must give all to receive All. Will you do this?

XIX

THE BLESSING OF LITTLE CHILDREN

Read S. Matthew xviii. 1–10, and xix. 13–15.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

THINK of the presence of God. 'I come back to Thee Who art my first beginning and my last end. Be Thou henceforth the only and entire object of my thoughts.' Make an act of humility. 'I would know Thee, O my God, and I would know myself, for in Thee is all my good, and in myself I am nothing.' Make an act of faith. 'Increase in me the faith which Thou didst implant in me at my baptism. Grant that I may live according to that faith, and that I may show forth by my deeds what I believe with my mind.' Say the usual opening devotions.

I

Picture the scene. Attracted by our Lord's Personality and His preaching, so unlike what they had ever heard before, some mothers in Israel brought their children to Him. The disciples tried to send them away; but when

our Lord heard of their action He was displeased and said, 'Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' Jesus loves all souls. He loves children. He has said of them: 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.' 'Their angels do always behold the face of My Father.' 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'

See Jesus laying His hands on the children; they and their mothers go away happy. Our Lord gently reminds His disciples that to enter the kingdom of heaven one must act as a little child. Consider some of the child-like qualities which are necessary for entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

II

The child is loving. Consider that while the Christian religion is intellectual and logical, it is concerned more with the heart and will than with the mind. At the centre of your religion there is not an intellectual formula, but a loving Person with a throbbing Heart. Jesus eternally pleads His love for you, calling you to Him, not by intellectual assent but by the glad and loving submission of your will to His will. His religion, be it repeated, is intellectual and de-

mands the service of your mind as well as of your heart and will ; but primarily it is a call from the Sacred Heart of Jesus to your sinful heart to come and find rest in His love. The child comes easily to Jesus because it loves easily. Remember that although the truths of God can be analysed by the mind, they are realized by the heart. Then become a little child and give your heart to Jesus. Why should you love Him so ? Because He first loved you. Say to Him, ' Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.'

III

The child is near to the kingdom of heaven because the child is teachable. Self-will and sin have not made devastating inroads upon his soul. Self-will hinders the growth of many people in the spiritual life. Intellectual pride besets the hearts of men. They dislike to admit that perhaps they are wrong, that they do not know all about the Christian religion, that others may know better than they. Many souls are too proud to be taught. But pride has not cast its evil snares about a child's life. The child is teachable. Pray for the teachableness of a child ; so shall you too enter the kingdom of heaven. Say the Collect for Pentecost.

' God, Who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit ; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things,

and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort ; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.'

IV

The child is dependent on father and mother for home and food and sympathy and love. Consciously or unconsciously, the child recognizes that it cannot have these necessities of life of itself, but must go to father or mother for them. These same things—home, food, sympathy, love—are necessities for you. You cannot have them of yourself. Are you willing to go in the spirit of a little child to your heavenly Father and ask trustingly for home and food and sympathy and love ? Have you ever stopped to consider that your true home is in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that your true food is the sacred Body and Precious Blood of Jesus, that your true sympathy flows from the sacred Humanity of Jesus, that your true love *is* Jesus ? Then cultivate your dependence on Him. Great holiness is great giving. The kingdom of heaven will be yours just in so far as you give yourself to Jesus. He is yours for the asking. Then ask Him to make you His very own child. ' Take possession of my heart, O good Jesu, and fill it with Thy love. Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.'

V

The child is enthusiastic. When you began your spiritual life, you too were enthusiastic for the cause of your religion. But now sloth dogs your steps. One of the chief reasons for failure in the attainment of the kingdom of heaven is sloth. The demon which walketh by noonday casts his spell upon souls and lures them away. Sloth is the sin which keeps us from progress in religion. There is no success in any walk in life save by hard work. Genius is largely hard work. How hard do you work at your religion? Frequently you treat religion in a way which would mean failure in any business. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. Do not refuse God the same energy and enthusiasm which you give your business. Say the Collect for the Sunday next before Advent.

'Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

VI

The child has imagination and vision. Life is an adventure. Giants and demons may beset the way, but the child knows that the hero will succeed; the villain will be discomfited; Truth and Right will triumph. Many souls fail be-

cause they have no vision. They are not conscious materialists. They are not conscious of anything. They have no vision, no imagination, no sense of the adventure and thrill of the Christian religion, no love of the battle, no looking for angelic help and super-substantial bread. Then cultivate your imagination and your sense of adventure. The hosts of darkness are arranged in battle against the legions of light. On which side are you? Cultivate your vision. Look for God.

XX

THE SACRED HEART

Read S. Matthew xi. 28–30.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

SAY the usual opening prayers. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the continued presence of God. 'O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Make an act of desire for our Lord. 'O Lord my God, would that I were truly meek and lowly of heart. O grant rest unto my soul.'

I

Picture our Lord, perhaps at the close of day, gathering His loved ones about Him for more intimate talk than was possible when the crowds thronged Him. You, too, have come to Him to-day to learn of Him and find rest for your soul. Only by such hours of deep communing with the Sacred Heart can you find rest for your soul. Hear Him calling you to give yourself to

His Sacred Heart. In that intimate communion of heart calling to heart you will learn of His love for you. Make an act of love to Him. 'O that I would always think of Thee and love Thee only.'

II

Ponder on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The heart is the symbol of all that is intimate and loving. From the heart spring our emotions, those impulses towards loving action. The heart is the treasure house of the loving soul. 'Where your treasure is there will your heart be also.' The heart is the channel of our love of God. 'Thou shalt love with all thy heart.' When our Lord describes Himself, He says He is 'meek and lowly of heart.' The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a symbol of the love of His sacred humanity for you. Jesus has always longed for your love. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' Make an act of love to His Sacred Heart. 'Blessed be His Sacred Heart.'

III

Consider some of the qualities of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The love of Jesus has zeal for souls. That is characteristic of our Lord's whole life of love—zeal and desire for souls. Love of souls sent Him into the world. It was the aim of His ministry, the meaning of His life and death. Think of some manifestations of His zeal for souls. Read S. John i. 48.

When Nathaniel asked Him, 'Whence knowest Thou me?' our Lord answered, 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.' Our Lord saw Nathaniel and craved his love. Jesus has known you long before you thought of coming to Him. He sees you and wants your love. Give it to Him. 'Jesus, most glorious Love, draw me after Thee in the bands of love.'

IV

The Sacred Heart is full of compassion. Consider how He healed the sick. He saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion towards them, and He healed their sick. Our Lord loves to help you. Your need is His opportunity. He will be moved with compassion when you come to Him to be healed of the disease called sin and self. Ask Him to help you.

'Jesus, Saviour, Who didst come to seek and to save that which is lost, save me.'

He has compassion on the multitude who have been with Him three days and have nothing to eat. See Him as He gazes on these thousands of men and women and children in this desert country with nothing to eat. He blesses the loaves and the fishes. There is enough and more than enough. They fill twelve baskets with the fragments that remain, so great is His bounty. His love for you is still more lavish. He longs to fill you in His ban-

queting house where 'the banner over Him is love.' Go to Him for the food of your empty heart.

'Jesu, zealous lover of souls, Whose delights are with the sons of men, make me to love Thee with a burning love.'

Ponder the compassion of our Lord with those who mourn. When He saw the sorrow of the widow of Nain, being moved with compassionate mercy towards her, He said to her, 'Weep not.' Do you mourn for a loved one? May our Lord Who said, 'Blessed are they that mourn,' of His infinite compassion comfort you; may He draw you into the hidden cavern of His cleft side and fill you with the love of His Sacred Heart.

When Jesus saw Mary weeping and the Jews also weeping who came with her, He groaned in spirit . . . and 'Jesus wept.' No wonder this family loved Him and knew He loved them. 'He whom Thou lovest is sick.' Yet you know Jesus loves you too. He has no favourites in the kingdom of heaven. He loves you with all the love of His Sacred Heart. 'My Beloved is mine and I am His.'

For sinners also He had compassion. Jesus hates sin, but loves the sinner. 'Neither do I condemn thee,' He says to one who had sinned deeply. In the parable of the lost sheep it is written that 'when He hath found it He layeth it on His shoulders rejoicing.' How gentle He is with S. Mary Magdalene! How He

understands S. Peter! How ready to be called 'the *friend* of sinners'! Jesus did not love only S. Mary Magdalene and S. Peter. He loves you. On you He has compassion. 'Woe is me that I do not love Thee, O Love of my life, for if I loved Thee truly I should have Thee always in my heart; for it is written, "Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."'

v

Consider the sensitiveness of the Sacred Heart. It is so easy to hurt those whom you love. You suffer most at the hands of those you love most. So it was with our Lord. To the Pharisee He said, 'Thou gavest Me no water . . . My feet with oil thou didst not anoint . . . Thou gavest Me no kiss.' Jesus misses these outward signs of courtesy and love. Often you treat our Lord as if He was not human at all. You forget so easily that He has a human heart which beats for love of you.

'Where are the nine?' He appreciates to the full the love of the one who returned to give thanks; but where are the others? He wants *all* souls to come to Him. Have you come? He wants *you*. He will miss you, if you do not come. 'Draw me after Thee, O most sweet Redeemer, Who hast said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Draw me to Thy Sacred Heart, O loving Lord.'

'Will ye also go away?' So many have

promised to follow. At the least sign of the Cross so many fail Him. At the least thing which you do not understand you fail. Will you go away also ? Ah, to whom will you go ?

VI

Listen to our Lord crying to you as He points to His Sacred Heart, 'Learn of Me.' That is your desire—to learn more of the love of the Sacred Heart. The Sacred Heart is the symbol of our Lord's love, human and divine ; the symbol of all that makes Him lovable to you, lovable beyond all measure. 'The measure of love is to love without measure.'

'O Love, how little art Thou known and loved. Come to me and pour Thyself forth into me, O eternal and most sweet Love. Let the fire of Thy love burn ever on the altar of my heart, and may it grow into such a flame that it will consume me utterly. Let nothing give me joy but only Thyself, O Lord Jesus Christ. Thou only art my desire, O eternal Wisdom. Thou art the treasure I seek, Thou the happiness for which I long. How beautiful art Thou, my Beloved, and how glorious for delights.'

XXI

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Read S. Matthew xxi. 1–16.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

REMIND yourself of the presence of God. He is ' nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet.' ' Come, Lord, my Joy, my Love, my Crown, come and make no long tarrying.' Say the usual opening devotions.

I

At last the time has come for the consummation of the sacrifice. With desire He has desired this hour. It behoved Him to enter Jerusalem because He was a King. And because He was such a King He must enter the Holy City as He did. He sends two of His disciples ahead into the village over against them, presumably Bethphage. There they found an ass's colt tied, whereon man had never sat. This colt they were to bring with them. When the disciples reached the village, they found all as He said. When they were questioned by the owner, they replied that the Master had need

of him. No further resistance was made. The multitude was expecting Him to make a royal entry, and the owner readily granted the use of the animal.

Meanwhile our Lord was preparing to enter Jerusalem. The disciples brought the colt to our Lord. See the people going out from Jerusalem to meet our Lord with palm branches in their hands. He is surrounded by the multitude who come from the city and those already accompanying Him. They spread their garments on the colt and stretch them along the road. Others hew down branches from the trees for a rude matting. The Hosanna rises to a higher pitch. Jesus rides forward, 'meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.' The procession sweeps forward towards Jerusalem. The enthusiasm is infectious and the multitude cry, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.' Join your praises to those of the multitude.

'To Thee be praise, to Thee be glory, to Thee be thanksgiving for ever and ever.'

II

When He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it.' 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens, and *ye would not*.'

So Jesus pleads for love, the love of your heart. That is the tragedy. He craves your love. He hungers and thirsts for you, and you do not come. Hasten to give yourself to Jesus.

'Hitherto I have loved persons who have not loved me. Now I will love Thee, O everlasting Lover of my soul, Who lovedst me before I knew Thee; for to love Thee is the highest virtue, and it is bliss to be loved by Thee.'

III

See the procession as it moves towards the Temple. Hear the tramp of feet, the shouts, the cries, 'Who is this?' The whole city is moved. 'This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.' So He rides to the Temple. He alone is silent: He alone is sad. On His cheeks are the traces of tears. He rides triumphant to His death. Make an act of sorrow and sympathy to our Lord. 'Thy love passeth knowledge. Would that these men had understood Thy love. Help me to understand.'

What was the difficulty? Why were these cries of triumph so soon to be changed to cries of hatred?

The Jews misunderstood. They thought they knew the Scriptures. They thought they understood His mission. But because they thought they understood, they had closed their minds to the truth of God. Had they understood they would have recognized our Lord's Messiahship. But their minds were closed.

There are few sins which block growth in the spiritual life as surely as pride of intellect, thinking that you know all and that you have learned all that there is to learn. Self-satisfaction is one of the chief hindrances to progress. If you have a closed mind, growth in love and understanding is blocked. Often the Christian becomes self-satisfied. Cultivate a divine discontent, a hunger and thirst after more love and more knowledge of God. It is absurd to think that you have attained all. It is absurd to think that any given age can fathom the mind of Christ. Pray for open-mindedness, willingness to be led further into the mysteries of Christ.

'Grant, O Lord, that I may never cease to follow after love and knowledge of Thee. Thee would I follow ever, never tempted by love of life nor by fear of death. Let me suffer all sorrow rather than lose Thee.'

IV

When the shadows of evening creep on and the multitude melt away, our Lord returns with the Twelve to Bethany, there to find rest. On the following day, Monday, He returns again to the city and for a second time cleanses the Temple. When He had come in triumph to the Temple the previous day, it was afternoon, and the sanctuary was comparatively empty of those who carried on their traffic there. But to-day it was filled again with those who bought

and sold. The house of God was a den of robbers. If it was fitting at the beginning of His doing of the Father's business that He should cleanse the Temple, even more appropriate is it now at the beginning of His Passion, when as King He claims all authority and power. As we compare the two scenes[1] and our Lord's words, we find on this occasion that He was all the more severe in that they had paid no attention to His former judgement.

How easy it is to fall back into the ways of sin—how difficult to repent. Do you really care that you have hurt God? The only motive for perseverance in repentance is the conviction that you have hurt God, that you have wounded the Sacred Heart. Fear or remorse can never lead you to permanent repentance, but only the realization of the love of God. God comes repeatedly to the temple of your soul and cleanses it. But you refuse His love and turn away from Him even as did the Jews when He came to them. But still He loves you, still He comes to you.

What must you do? The remedy lies in deeper knowledge of Him and of His love for you. You must have more of Him because repentance is only born in contemplation of the love of God. Turn your eyes more resolutely to the crucifix. Try to realize the love which

[1] In this meditation the view is followed which holds that there were two cleansings of the Temple, one at the beginning and the other at the end of our Lord's ministry.

was willing to suffer even unto the Cross for you. Sin meant the driving of great nails into His hands, the ploughing of His side by the spear. You know the nails could never hold Him there. Only His love for you binds Him on the Cross. You need more of the knowledge of God in your life, more Communions, deeper meditations, more love of your cross. Ask for more love and He will give it to you.

'I thirst to know Thee more clearly; I hunger to love Thee wholly ; I beseech Thee, give me Thy love.'

XXII

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

Read S. Matthew xxvi. 26–28.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

PONDER the presence of God. Say the usual opening devotions.

I

Picture the Institution of the Eucharist. See our Lord with the Apostles kneeling around Him. He breaks the bread and blesses the cup.

Consider the Sacrifice of the Mass. The Holy Eucharist is a sacrifice and a feast. In the Eucharist our Lord Jesus Christ, truly present in His risen and glorified Humanity under the veils of bread and wine, offers Himself in sacrifice to the Father and unites Himself to those faithful and devout souls who in a state of grace receive the sacred species. The Eucharist is a sacrifice and a feast. Consider the Sacrament as a sacrifice.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of

the ever-blessed Trinity, took human nature unto Himself and was born of the Blessed Virgin that He might offer to the Father that perfect act of self-oblation and of sacrifice of which sinful man was incapable. Man had sinned, and by his separation from God was unable to offer a perfect sacrifice. So it was that God Himself offered the sacrifice to God.

> There was none other good enough
> To pay the price of sin.

By uniting Himself to humanity our Lord did what man was unable to do. The atoning sacrifice must be offered by one who was both man and more than man. No angel could perform this sacrifice, for an angel would be outside the realm of man. 'He took not upon Him the nature of angels.' He took human nature of the ever-blessed Virgin, and the God-Man fulfils the requirements of sacrifice. He is Man and yet untainted by sin.

The sacrifice which our Lord offered was the offering of a whole life of self-oblation to the Father's will. He came not to do His own will but the will of the Father. That surrender of His will came to its crisis in the Garden when He utterly accepted it: 'Not My will but Thine be done.' That life of self-surrender and of self-sacrifice came to its climax on the Cross. You are redeemed with a whole life of sacrifice. It was not the Cross in itself which pleased the Father, but a whole life of surrender which was

willing to suffer to the Cross. It was man in union with God in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ Who was making the sacrifice, a human action as well as a divine action. Give thanks to God for the gift of His Son.

II

The sacrifice which our Lord offered upon the Cross has never ceased to be offered to the Father. That sacrifice has not been repeated and it never can be repeated. But although it was offered in time it is also an eternal action, for it is a sacrifice for ever, a sacrifice without end. When the Holy Sacrifice is offered, you are offering the one Sacrifice which our Lord offered to take away your sins and bring you to His heavenly Father. His sacrifice which was offered on the Cross and which He is presenting in heaven is also offered to God in the Holy Eucharist. There is only one Sacrifice, because there is only one Victim. There is only one Sacrifice, because the Offering on the Cross, on the heavenly altar, and on the altar of the Church is one Offering. In heaven our Lord presents Himself before the Father and there ever abides as sacrificed. His presentation of Himself as sacrificed is a permanent fact. That fact of His sacrifice is pleaded in the Mass. The worship of the earthly altar is identical with the worship in heaven, for the same Victim is present on the earthly altar as on the heavenly. In heaven the Sacrifice is offered openly, on

earth it is veiled. Say the hymn, 'O Saving Victim':

O Saving Victim, opening wide
The gate of heaven to man below,
Our foes press hard on every side,
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.

All praise and thanks to Thee ascend
For evermore, blest One in Three;
O grant us life that shall not end
In our true native land with Thee. Amen.

III

That the Mass is a sacrifice is shown to us by the circumstances in which our Lord was engaged. He was taking part in the Feast of the Passover commemorating the time when the Jews had slain a lamb and, having sprinkled the door-posts, were waiting to pass from the land of sin into the land of promise. The words of institution *in themselves* are not sacrificial, but taken in connection with the Passover service in which our Lord was engaged, they mean 'Offer this as a sacrifice.'

The meaning that you are to ponder is that here is a change of *nature* made possible for you, not just a change of relationship between you and God. While you were a sinner Christ died for you that you might put away your sinful nature and become a saint. He died that you might become holy and acceptable to God, a new man in Christ Jesus. Are you trying to

change your nature, and putting off the old man put on the new Man, Jesus Christ your Lord ?

IV

This Sacrifice is not only something that is done *for* you on Calvary and in heaven, and *by* you in the Mass, but it must be done *in* you. What is offered is the whole Christ of Whom you are a member. Into His infinite Sacrifice you are plunged. By your surrender you are merged into the Sacrifice of the Cross. Your part is to give yourself more and more. Salvation is offered to all, but God cannot make you accept. You must come and give yourself freely to Him that His act of sacrifice may be accomplished in you. Jesus must be born in you ; He must die daily to self in you; He must be crucified in you ; He must rise to righteousness in you; He must ascend in you to heavenly places. Are you giving yourself to Him to live in you and you in Him ?

Why do you hesitate ? God is not a force, a formula, or a philosophy. Your life is in the hands of One that is a Person, and that Person has a heart which beats with love for you. You are His personal care. ' He calleth His own by name.' ' You are of more value than many sparrows.' Then give yourself and all your problems and needs into this fire of Sacrifice. Nothing is outside the scope of this Sacrifice. Your life is a Christian life just in so far as it touches this Sacrifice. What was the Sacri-

fice ? It was the life-long act of One Who gave Himself completely to the will of the Father. The Christian is one who gives himself. You are not only to imitate our Lord ; you are to give yourself to Him so that you may live in Him and He in you. His life was above all a life given. Your life, if it is to be Christian, is a life given, a life surrendered to God.

V

Consider your life. Is it one that is completely given, utterly surrendered to the will of the Father ? Think of all the selfishness and self-love and self-seeking and self-gratification that is in your life. You are called to a life of sacrifice, a life of surrender, a life of giving yourself. That is not a popular ideal. As long as one paints an ideal of a gentle Jesus going about doing good, the Christian listens. But when he is reminded that our Lord also spoke of sin and contended with Pharisees and cast out devils and hungered and fasted and went up a long hill called Calvary and bade men take up their cross and follow to the summit of that hill, then the call is not so attractive.

'The disciple is not above his master.' The life of your Lord was a life of sacrifice. Your life must be a life of sacrifice, a life surrendered. The Christian ideal is that of a sacrificed life. To have Jesus live in you means that you, too, must be sacrificed. You must be crucified with Christ. It is only by being

sacrificed with Him that you may rise and live with Him eternally in the heavens. Are you offering yourself in sacrifice to God ?

VI

'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.' Thus spake our Saviour. And you, too, will draw men to God as you are lifted up in sacrifice. Out of your sacrifice to the Father will come blessings to the brethren. Just as Jesus wins souls by sacrifice, so will you draw souls to the Father by the offering of your will in willing and joyful submission. Remember that it must be a joyful offering and a willing sacrifice of yourself. In the oblation of yourself you find Him Whom your soul loveth.

XXIII

THE REAL PRESENCE OF OUR LORD

Read S. John vi. 48–58.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

QUIET yourself in mind and body, making an act of your will to think of nothing except God. Recall His presence in your heart. Make an act of the presence of God.

'O sacred and adorable Trinity, my God and my whole good, give me Thyself and it is enough for me. Abide in me and draw me closer unto Thee, for Thou art my God and my All.'

Make an act of faith. 'My God, I believe in Thee and in all Thy Church doth teach, for Thou hast said it and Thy word is true.' Say the usual opening devotions.

I

Recall the picture in the preceding meditation. See our Saviour in the Upper Room instituting the Holy Eucharist. Watch Him taking the bread and the cup. Hear His

words, 'This is My Body. . . . This is My Blood.' That which He gave was Himself.

'O God, Who in a wonderful Sacrament hast left unto us a memorial of Thy Passion, grant me so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Thy Body and Thy Blood, that I may ever perceive within myself the fruits of Thy redemption; Who livest and reignest ever one God, world without end. Amen.'

Place beside the picture of the Institution of the Eucharist an early Mass in your parish church. Outside all is cold and grey, but within is warmth and colour. On the altar two candles point their flaming spears heavenward, heralding the coming of the King. The Mass has swept on its dramatic way to the act of consecration. All is tense and still, for Jesus is coming. See the priest bending over the altar, saying again the words of our Lord, 'This is My Body.' He kneels and the bell rings. The Host is lifted above the celebrant's head, the Cup of Salvation is raised aloft, and you know that Jesus is present, the same Lord Jesus Who instituted the Sacrament in the Upper Room, the same Divine Victim Who offered Himself on the altar of the Cross, the same Priest Who liveth for ever in heaven.

This is the meaning of the doctrine of the Real Presence. In the Holy Eucharist our Lord is really present under the veils of bread and wine. Make an act of worship to our Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament.

'Blessed, praised, and adored be our Lord Jesus Christ on His throne of glory in heaven and in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.'

II

Ponder the fact that in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar Jesus Christ is really present. When you make your act of worship in the Mass you are worshipping our Lord as really present to you as He was in days of old to S. John and S. Peter and the others. When you make your communion, you receive Jesus Christ, very God and truly Man. Your Lord and Saviour gives Himself to you entirely. The sacred species of bread does not convey the sacred Body of our Lord exclusively, nor does the sacred species of wine convey the precious Blood of our Lord alone. Christ does not exist divided, His Body and His Blood are not separable from each other, nor from Him. Your Saviour is wholly present, and every particle of bread and every drop of wine conveys our Lord to you. Renew your act of thanksgiving for the presence of your Saviour.

'Blessed be Jesus Christ in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.'

III

The doctrine of the Real Presence teaches that by the words and acts of the priest our Lord Jesus Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist under the veils of bread and wine.

The Presence is that of the risen and glorified Saviour. That Presence is in no way dependent on your faith, but is accomplished entirely by the act of consecration. That which is offered you is always the same, the risen and glorified Jesus, God and Man. But the result of your communion in your soul depends on your receptivity. The same Gift is offered to all. To the soul in mortal sin, the Gift which was offered in blessing is turned to condemnation; as S. Paul says, 'He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.'

Ponder the danger of an unworthy communion. That which was offered for your life may be turned to your death by your unworthy communion. God offers all His love, and all who approach the altar receive the same Lord Jesus. Enlarge the vessel of your heart so that you may appropriate more of the love of God. Let not the fear of an unworthy communion keep you from the table of the Lord. Rather let your sense of unworthiness lead you to the confessional.

Labour by love and abandonment to the will of God to become a more worthy vessel of the Lord of love in Holy Communion. Search your life for acts of self-will and self-seeking and selfishness. Root out indifference and ingratitude and fear. It is these hidden sins which tend to harden your heart and make your soul insensitive to the gift of God. Cast out every act

which may not be offered to Him. That which He would not think, look at, speak, or do, you must not think, look at, speak, or do.

Remember that it is not you that lives, but Christ Jesus Who lives in you. He thinks in your mind, sees through your eyes, speaks with your lips, acts by your will. Recall often the fact of His indwelling Presence and so shall you become a more worthy vessel to receive His sacramental Presence in Holy Communion. Make an act of utter abandonment to God.

'Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of Truth.'

IV

Consider, as one of the many results of the presence of Jesus in your soul, the cleansing action of Holy Communion. Your communion is not a substitute for your confession. You must be in a state of grace to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord. But forgiveness of sin does not destroy all the work of sin. In Holy Communion your soul, cleansed by penance, is refreshed and strengthened, the wounds of sin are healed, and your spiritual powers are revitalized. By your communions your soul is built up as a fair house of God. This is what the Church Catechism means when it speaks of 'the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of Christ.'

By feeding upon the Sacred Body and Precious Blood of our Lord, you grow in that union

with God which is your vocation. Make an act of desire for God.

'O the depth of the love of God. O Love unspeakable, Who to form a perfect union with man didst raise him to Thyself, what thanks can I give for Thy Presence in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar? Let Thine own love praise Thee and all Thy works in me magnify Thee for ever.'

XXIV

THE TRAITOR

Read S. Matthew xxvi. 30–56.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

MAKE an act of contrition. 'I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; yet now I hear Thy sweet voice saying, Turn to Me again and I will refresh thee.' Make an act of faith in your Lord. 'O Lord Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, I most firmly believe those things to be true which, by Thy revelation, our holy Mother-Church believes and teaches. And for these truths I would willingly die.' Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, and the Collect for Pentecost.

'God, Who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.'

I

Turn the eyes of your mind to the Garden of Gethsemane. See our dear Lord kneeling in prayer. The shadows cast by the sickly light of the moon disclose the three other disciples —not wrestling in prayer as is the Saviour but sunk down in sleep. Ponder the sore amazement of the Saviour, His utter loneliness and desolation. Why was this sorrow unto death, this sore amazement of the Son of God ? Was it caused by fear, either mental or bodily ? No, it was the horror of sin !

In a garden sin entered the world by the disobedience of the first man. Here in a garden sin is being overcome by the obedience unto death of the Second Man, Christ Jesus the God-Man. By submitting to the will of the Father even unto death He is disarming death. By burying the cruel shaft of death in His own Sacred Heart, He is taking away that instrument for ever. O give thanks to the Son of God for overcoming death and bringing to you life by His perfect obedience unto death—even the death of the Cross. 'We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.'

That agony of soul which our Lord suffered no man may understand. It was the climax of His submission of will to the Father. He came into the world to do the will of the Father. That cup He would not let pass from Him. He

would drain to the uttermost the draught of utter submission. See your Saviour as He agonizes for love of you.

'Let Thy cup pass from Thee to me, O Lord, for all bitterness tasted for Thy sake becomes sweet to me. O Jesu, who will give to me to feel Thy sorrow, like to no other sorrow? Help me, by Thy grace, that I may be counted worthy to suffer with Thee. Teach me to give myself wholly to Thee, that I may learn Thy holy will and find grace to fulfil it.'

II

See Judas approaching. He comes to Jesus and says, 'Hail Master.' The traitor kisses Him.

'O Jesus most gentle, I praise and glorify Thee for Thine unspeakable love which Thou didst manifest toward Thy traitor disciple when Thou wast betrayed by a kiss and bound by wicked men. O grant that I may never betray Thee.'

Ponder the downfall of Judas. It is a study in the pride of man and the love of God. By tracing out the gradual downfall of Judas, you may learn of the devastating clutch of pride. See how slowly Judas falls, because he was too proud to ask for help. See how he himself, of his own will, 'went to his own place.'

Judas was perhaps handsome and a very attractive personality. But he had, like you, the stain of pride in his soul. He met our Lord

at the seaside and loved Him. There can be no doubt that in the beginning Judas loved our Lord. But his conversion was not complete. It was easy to give himself at first. Later it was harder. Conversion is a lifelong process.

But in the beginning Judas did love our Lord. But he had a besetting temptation, covetousness. Judas knew this. Many was the time when he was moved to ask our Lord for help. But he was too proud to ask for help. He did not want to admit his sin, and the shame of his temptation to covetousness. He thought he would shock Jesus. And Jesus might take away the bag.

For Judas loved his position as treasurer. He did not want to lose that position of prominence. It was a hard position. It meant separation from Jesus, staying behind to pay the bills, going ahead to make arrangements. Separation from Jesus ! He heard the talk and gossip. Was He the Messiah ? Would He be the King ? If He were King, He would choose Judas for His Prime Minister.

Then came the feeding of the five thousand. What a chance it was to make Him King ! See the triumph on Judas' face. See his joy as he helps distribute the food. ' Take a lot, take more, there 's plenty more.' See him laughing as he throws the food into the laps of the multitude. Jesus will proclaim Himself King ; and he, Judas, will be the first in the kingdom.

Then see his anger in his disillusionment. What a mistake ! What a failure ! The moon is rising, and the crowds are melting away. Jesus is in prayer on the mountain top, and there is one angry traitor.

Then comes the black time when Judas broods over the failure. Still there is hope. Still He might . . . perhaps . . . surely . . .

Look to Him Who loves Judas. See the Christ trying to win that soul. Jesus redoubles His efforts to claim his soul. He loves Judas. He craves his love. He wants his soul. He knows what is happening. See Him keeping Judas aside trying to win him. See Him sleeping by his side, hoping for a time in the night when Judas might speak. And Judas wants to speak. But no, he is too proud.

III

Recall the scene at Bethany. See Mary pouring the ointment over the feet of Jesus. It is an act of love. Judas saw love. He hated it. 'Why was not this sold and given to the poor?' Not that he cared for the poor. His was a forced option. He hated love. He would not love. He was too proud to make such a submission. He would not love. He would hate.

See Judas making his plans to betray our Lord. Read his angry thoughts. He would betray Him, this super-religious, this pious fool. He would get even. He would not stand for this. Pride, wicked pride !

Recall Palm Sunday. To the Saviour it meant love. To Judas it was foolishness. 'The silly palms. The rabble. Jesus crying. Like a woman. The crowd's yells. The stupid children.'

'The cleansing of the Temple. An act of a fanatic. Just what might be expected.'

And as the crowd drifts away, Judas lingers behind to make his bargain. He goes to the priests. 'What will you give me, fifty pieces of silver? What! Well then forty! It's cheap at that! No? Come come! I want forty! No? Well, then thirty! Not a piece less. Done! Sold for thirty pieces of silver!'

IV

And all the time Jesus is loving Judas, trying to win him back. How the Saviour labours for that soul. He washes Judas' feet, gives him the sop of bread, the sign of friendship. But no, Judas will not submit, his pride will not let him. So Jesus says, 'What thou doest, do quickly'; as if to say, 'Do it and come back quickly and ask for forgiveness.' O the sorrow of the Saviour at losing a soul!

See the meeting in the Garden. Hear the words, 'Friend, wherefore art thou come?' Did he come for love? No, for hate. O if he would only ask for love!

The kiss. The Love of God betrayed by the sign of love.

As the soldiers lead Jesus away, remorse

strikes Judas. They were not going to kill Him, were they? No! No! they would not kill Him! He would not let them. They could not kill Him! See Judas as he hurries to the priests. See his wild face and hear his babbling words of horror. And the priests laugh at him. He flings the coins down on the marble floor and rushes out. *And it was night.*

V

Yet there is hope. Still is Jesus trying to win Judas. If he would only kill his pride and go to Jesus. There is time. The trial is going on. He could have gone to Him. Jesus is longing for him. Still there is time. The procession is forming to go to Calvary. He could go to Jesus and find forgiveness. But his pride will not permit him. The procession starts one way: Judas goes the other.

He turns away from Calvary and rushes down to the valley of Hinnom, down to the death valley, the valley of bones. He might have gone to the Hill of Life. But his pride would not let him. He went to the valley of death. He hurries along the road, stumbling in his haste. What are those footsteps behind him? The feet of Jesus hurrying after him. Judas knows Jesus is hastening after him. He will not let Him catch up. What are those eyes? The eyes of Jesus, full of love and compassion. He will not look. What are those hands outstretched to him? The pierced hands of Jesus

outstretched to him. But he will not let them touch him. That voice, 'Come unto Me.' He will not listen. He rushes to his death. He will not live. He is too proud. He must hurry. He pulls off his belt as he runs. He comes to the cliff, hurls the strap over the tree, and leaps out into eternity. The dead tree breaks as if unwilling to bear the body of the traitor.

Judas goes to his own place, and Jesus is dying on the Cross for love of him. Why did he go to hell? He went of his own self-will. God did not send him to hell. He went of his own self-will, of his own pride. Once he loved Jesus. Of his pride, his own pride, he went to hell.

Jesus died for Judas. But He could not save him against his own will. Jesus died for all men. But they must come to Him. Jesus died for you. You must come to Him. He cannot make you come. You must put away your pride and self-will and come to the feet of the merciful Saviour.

Will you come?

XXV

THE NIGHT OF SORROW

Read S. John xviii. 12–40.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

MAKE an act of contrition. 'O Saviour most dear to me, Thou knowest how many sins I have committed against Thee and how far I am from loving Thee as Thou wouldst have me love. O be merciful to me and save me.' Say the opening devotions.

I

Picture the scene. See the soldiers binding Jesus. They close about Him. The disciples forsake Him and flee. The soldiers lead Him away through the gate to the Palace of Annas. Hear the tramp of the guard as they march through the deserted streets. Make an act of love to Jesus.

'O Jesus, how swiftly did Thine enemies force Thee to move to Thy death. But Thy love was urging Thee still more swiftly. With that same love will I love Thee now and for ever.'

We know nothing from the Gospels of what happened in the Palace of Annas, save this brief statement, 'Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.' There appear to have been two interviews before Caiaphas, one a private one described by S. John and the public trial described by S. Luke. Before the high priest in private our Lord bore Himself with all the majesty which became the Son of God. It was this calmness which so enraged one of the officers that he struck Jesus. But our Lord answers without resentment or complaining. Make an act of contrition for this blow and all blows which you have struck at the Son of God.

'O Passion of Christ, greatly to be honoured. O love of God, heal my wounds and pardon all the blows of sin with which I have assailed Thee.'

II

Picture now the scene in the hall when Peter denies our Lord. See him as he comes into the courtyard where, in the cold spring night, a fire had been lighted. Note the glow of the fire as it shines on the bearded faces of those who huddle around the fire talking with Eastern volubility of the strange events of the Prisoner. The red light flickers and glows, throwing a dull light on the faces of the men as they talk.

See Peter approaching the fire to warm himself and to hear what was said. He thinks he

will be safe from recognition if he stays in the outer circle. He is restless, yet very still. He sits down among the servants. It was this attempt at indifference which attracted the notice of the serving maid. She charges him with being a follower of the Prisoner. The chill strikes not only at his body but at his soul. Hear him as he denies the Master. Three times he denies. How it must have disappointed our Lord Who loved Peter so much. The Lord turns and looks upon Peter. What a look of love! He goes out to weep bitterly.

Think of your sins which have so disappointed God. Our Lord has a plan for your life, a work which He wants you to do. He has prepared you for this work. But by your denials of Him you spoil His plans. And yet, as with Peter, He loves you still. Review your life and see how you have balked the plans of God by your denial and sin. Hasten to make reparation and assure Him that you will not deny Him again.

'O Saviour of the world, denied by Peter and by me, how often have I wounded Thee by my sin. I cast myself on Thy love, resolved never to sin again.'

III

Then comes the public trial. The high priest adjures Jesus to tell them if He be the Messiah, and Divine. Solemn, majestic, calm is His reply. They all heard His claim. Adore the Son of God.

The sufferings of that night are not over yet. From the high priest He is led to Pilate. Pilate asks Him, saying, 'Art Thou the King of the Jews?' Jesus answers, 'Thou sayest.' When Pilate is unable to find any fault in Him, they are the more fierce in their denunciations. A way out of the difficulty seems to offer itself to Pilate when he learns that Jesus is of Herod's jurisdiction. Pilate starts Him on another journey, this time to Herod. Herod questions Him with many words but He answers nothing.

There is something very terrible in this silence. He is willing to answer the high priest and Pilate, but for Herod He has no words. Our Lord's silence is a terrible condemnation of Herod's sins. Herod, balked and angered, with his men 'set Him at naught and mocked Him and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe and sends Him again to Pilate.'

'O Jesus, our spotless Lord, Who didst will to be cruelly dragged from one judgement seat to another, guide Thou my footsteps into the way of peace and bid me come unto Thee.'

IV

You are once more with your Lord outside the Praetorium. The crowd is increasing. They came not only to see what would happen to Jesus but also to witness the release of a prisoner, according to the Roman custom at the Passover. For this they begin to clamour. If the release of Barabbas could be accomplished,

the doom of Jesus was the more certain. See Pilate sitting upon the judgement throne. Before he can proceed comes the message from his wife about her dream and her entreaty to him to 'have nothing to do with this just Man.' Such a dream could not fail to impress a Roman. He appeals to the Jews on behalf of Jesus. But the Sanhedrists prevail. The incited mob calls for the release of Barabbas. To the question about Jesus comes the dread cry, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him.' In vain Pilate expostulates and reasons. Popular frenzy has its way. So he solemnly washes his hands and the people cry, 'His Blood be upon us and our children.'

'We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.'

V

See Jesus scourged. He is stripped of His garments, His hands are tied, His back is bent, and He is bound to a column. The terrible scourge is laid on His back. 'He gave His back to the smiters'; 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.'

'O most meek Jesus, Who wast bound naked to a pillar and there wast cruelly scourged for my sins, grant that when my soul is tossed by continuous tempests of temptation I may find in this scourging a haven of refuge. Bind me to

this pillar with the bands of a man, with the cords of love.'

The scourging over, the soldiers lead Him back into the Praetorium, and there Jesus is once more mocked. From His bleeding Body they tear the clothes and in mockery array Him in scarlet. For a crown they weave the cruel circlet of thorns, and for sceptre they place in His hands the reed. In mock proclamation they mock Him as King.

'O Christ the King, the Crown of all Thy saints, Who by a torture unknown before wast crowned with thorns and robed with purple in mockery, make me to bear all contempt patiently and be willing to be of no account in the eyes of men and always to love Thy crown of thorns.'

VI

Pilate hopes to disarm the Jews by this spectacle of suffering. See Jesus coming forth from the mockery, arrayed as a mock king. See the governor presenting Him to the people. Hear Pilate's words, 'Behold the Man.' But far from appeasing the multitude they cry the more, 'Crucify Him.' Pilate again seeks converse with Jesus. Hear the cries of the Jews louder and louder: 'If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend. Whoso maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.'

When Pilate heard this saying, he sat once more in the judgement-seat in a place called Gabbatha, 'the pavement.' So solemn was the

moment that S. John records the hour. It was Friday of the Passover about the sixth hour. Hear Pilate once more. 'Behold your King.' But they cry the more. 'We have no king but Caesar.' 'Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified.'

'O Lover of souls, delivered to an unjust death, Who wast a mirror of innocence and holiness, how much more ought I to bear the unrighteous judgement of men, I who so often have committed grievous sins.'

XXVI

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Read S. John xix. 16–37.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen*

MAKE an act of the presence of God. 'Thou art present in all my life. O that I had always loved Thee. Delay not, O my soul, to love thy God. Love that Love which loved thee from everlasting.' Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, the *Hail Mary*, and the Collect for the Annunciation.

'We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts; that, as we have known the Incarnation of Thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His Cross and Passion we may be brought unto the glory of His Resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.'

1

Picture the scene. Pilate has pronounced sentence. Once more our Lord is robed. The purple robe is torn from His wounded Body, the crown of thorns from His bleeding head.

The terrible preparations are soon made. The Cross is made ready with the nails and the hammer. See Jesus going forth bearing His Cross.

'Go forth, O good Jesus, laden with the wood of the Cross and pressed down with the weight of Thy love for me. O Thou Who didst never spare Thyself, spare me who have rejected Thy love.'

See Jesus as He goes to Golgotha, 'the place of a skull.' Look upon His holy face, 'so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.' He is 'despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He is taken from prison and from judgement.' Since the Paschal Supper He has not tasted of food. For long hours in Gethsemane the dark waters have come into His soul. There He agonized till the blood stood in great drops on His brow. He has been hurried to Annas and Caiaphas, to Pilate, to Herod, and to Pilate again. His mangled Body is hardly able to bear the terrible weight of the Cross.

'I will love Thee, O my Jesus, fainting under the Cross. I will love Thee for Thou hast loved me from everlasting; Thou hast loved me unto the Cross, even the burden of the Cross.'

II

Consider as you view our Lord falling under the burden of the Cross, that His Mother was

not far away. She, like all mothers, would be as near to her Son as it was possible to be. She did not think of herself, but only of Him. She followed as closely as she could. Perhaps from time to time she caught a glimpse of Him and longed to soothe His brow and wipe away the blood and sweat from His face. How she longed to be with Him. She followed closely in the sad procession, desiring Him Whom she loved.

And now they meet on the Road of Sorrows, the Mother of Sorrows and her Son full of sorrow and acquainted with grief. The crowd opens for a moment and she flies to His side. What a wonderful meeting ! It is a moment when little could be said, but heart speaks to heart. See the frail form of the holy Mother as she bends tenderly over the burdened form of her divine Son. There is nothing like sorrow to bind hearts together. What a consolation it must have been for our Lord to meet His Mother.

' O Jesu, Heart of Love, I will love Thee. O Mary, Mother of Love, pray for me.'

But the Roman soldiers push her aside. The meeting is but momentary. Up to the last gate which leads from the city our Lord bears His Cross. Here His strength fails Him. A man coming up from the country meets the sorrowful procession. The Cross is laid on Simon of Cyrene. He does not find it hard to bear but rather a joy, a yoke easy and a burden light.

'Thy yoke, O Lord, is sweet and Thy burden is light. Grant that I may joyfully bear it and carry my cross after Thee.'

III

While the Cross is laid on Simon the women of Jerusalem close around the fainting figure of our Lord, raising their cries of pity. At the entrance of Jerusalem Jesus had wept over that city's daughters. Now they weep over Him. But He in His love thinks not of Himself but of them. 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.' What love is that of your Lord Who in the midst of His sufferings thinks not of Himself but of you! So great was His love for you that it drowned the pain. He thought only of you and how He loved you.

'O Jesu, shall I ever comprehend the depth of Thy love which thinks ever of me? O Jesu, I do love Thee, and I want to think only of Thee and of Thy love.'

IV

It was nine o'clock when our Lord reached Calvary. It was a Jewish custom to offer to the victim a draught of strong wine mingled with myrrh, to deaden consciousness. But when this draught was offered Jesus, He would not drink. He would bear to the full all suffering for you. He would meet all the terrors of death. His was a voluntary offering of His life, and He

would not spare Himself the least detail of human woe.

'O how boundless is Thy love, dear Jesus, wherewith Thou hast loved me. I too will love with boundless love.'

V

So they crucified Him with two thieves, one on either side, as if He were the ringleader in crime. And over His head they fixed His title, 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews.' When the Sanhedrists were told of this title they hastened to Pilate to get it changed. But Pilate would not alter the words. So they returned to the place of sacrifice to taunt and jeer.

Picture our Lord raised on the Cross, His arms stretched out to embrace all the world in His love. 'Dear Lord, Who didst say, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," draw me unto Thee and receive me into Thy most Sacred Heart.'

VI

Now ponder the agonies of the Cross, physical, mental, and spiritual. It is a weary, agonized waiting. The darkness thickens around. The soldiers drink their wine and cast coarse jests at the Sufferer as they wait for Him to die. They are impatient for the affair to be over. They do not want to wait at the Cross. Marcus is to meet a street girl in Jerusalem. Why can't the Man die! The crowd slowly drifts away.

There is Joseph, the money-changer. He must hurry to Jericho before the price of exchange alters. He does not wait. And Simon the Sadducee has an important engagement in Bethany. He cannot wait. They all drift away. Only the Beloved Disciple and the Sorrowful Mother stand by the Cross of Jesus. How she longs to help Him, she who, like all mothers, longs to smooth all His bed in His sickness. But now His bed is the cruel bed of the Cross, and she may not help. She simply stands by the Cross, knowing that it comforts Him to know she is there. She is racked with suffering, but she thinks not of herself; she only thinks of Him. She is weary unto death, but she thinks not of herself; she only thinks of Him. 'There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother.'

Do you stand faithfully and lovingly by the Cross of Jesus? When the Cross is heavy upon you do you pity yourself, or do you forget self and think only of Jesus? Never was there the thought in His mind: 'This have I done for thee, what doest thou for Me?' He never bargains in that way; He loves you. The Sorrowful Mother thinks not of herself; she loves her Son. You must do the same. Never allow yourself to think, 'Look at all I have done. What are people doing for me?' Your whole purpose and desire must be to love.

'O crucified Jesu, Thou didst love me unto

the death, even the death of the Cross. I will love Thee and think only of Thy wondrous love.'

For three hours the Saviour has hung on the Cross. It is midday, and now the sun hides itself and 'there is darkness over all the land from the sixth hour to the ninth hour.' The darkness enters into the soul of Jesus. Into this darkness of His soul you may not enter. His agony is deepening into death. Upon Him is loneliness and a sense of being utterly forsaken, of complete dereliction. Hear the dread cry : 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

'Out of the deeps of the love of my heart I cry unto Thee. O forsake me not, for Thou art my Love, my God, and my All.'

VII

See Him as He emerges from the depths of that darkness. Hear the cry : 'I thirst.' One of the soldiers fills a sponge with vinegar and puts it to His lips. He accepts the act of love and passes on to taste of death. He passes on with desire for His hour. His last cry is with a loud voice and not as one dying. It is not death that approaches our Lord ; rather He approaches death. So as a Conqueror He bows His head and gives up the ghost.

A shudder runs through all nature. The Temple veil is rent from top to bottom, the earth quakes and the graves give up their dead.

It is at the hour when the priest was entering the Holy Place to offer incense there. But the veil hanging in two parts tells us that by the Sacrifice of Christ a perfect offering of love has been made and the veil between God and man is for ever rent. Jesus, by His perfect offering of Himself, by the complete abandonment of Himself to the Father, has opened the gates of heaven. 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.'

The soldier pierces the side of Jesus. His Sacred Heart is open to all mankind. In that cavern you may find love and peace.

'Bury my heart in Thy Sacred Heart, my Jesus, and hide me in Thy wounds, that I be never found apart from Thee.'

XXVII

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD

Read S. John xx. 1–24.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

MAKE an act of joy in the risen Saviour. 'O how wonderful is Thy glory, O Lord, as Thou dost rise gloriously from the dead. O that I had hearts as many as Thy creatures, that I might joy in Thy love, rendering Thee the love that they never pay.' Say the opening devotions.

I

Picture the scene. Dawn is streaking the grey sky. Jesus' loved ones are making their way to the rock-hewn tomb in the garden. See Mary Magdalene going to the sepulchre of her dear Lord. She and her companions are coming with sweet spices for a last offering of love. See their grief. Hear their sobs. They reach the grave and lo, the door of the tomb is rolled away! See them cautiously entering the tomb. The body is not there. Has some one stolen

it? They examine the carefully folded grave clothes. Then comes the vision of angels. See them bowing in wonder. Hear the words, 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, He is risen.' See the joy which envelops them. He has returned to them. What joy fills their hearts. They hasten away to tell the others. Renew your act of joy in the risen Jesus.

'O King of glory, Lord of Hosts, Who didst rise from the dead glorious in power, I rejoice in Thy triumph, and I pray Thee to give me power to rise from the life of sin and live with Thee.'

II

The climax of this day of wonder is the coming of Jesus Himself. 'The same day at evening . . . came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.' He comes to you, too, in the midst of trouble and perplexity, showing His pierced hands and side and brings you His message of peace. Why are you so fearful, so doubting, so slow to trust the everlasting love? Jesus is risen, He lives in His Church, nay He lives in you. The battle is over. Christ has conquered sin and death and desires to reign in you. Give yourself to Him and you will find peace.

'O risen Jesus, King and Conqueror, Who didst rise triumphant and dost reign in the hearts of Thy people, reign in me and give peace. I pray Thee to triumph once more in

Thy servant. In Thy grace I will conquer every power of hell. Then take Thy power and reign in the soul of Thy servant.'

III

The Resurrection, stated in its simplest terms, means the return of Jesus, the same and yet different. It is the same Jesus with the same Body. But His Body, though the same flesh and bones, is now glorified, endowed with new powers. No longer can He suffer. His power over matter is absolute. He appears and disappears at will. He eats, but He has no need of food. He is the same, but there is an added glory and power. In Him is the power of the Resurrection. Give thanks to God for the Resurrection of His dear Son.

'I yield Thee hearty thanks, O God, for the glorious Resurrection of Thy dear Son our Lord, and ask that I too may be a partaker of the power of His Resurrection.'

IV

The Resurrection of our Lord teaches you the continuity of your human nature in Jesus. He did not take your nature for a while and then discard it as of no importance. Jesus wears your human nature now triumphant in heaven. He has proved to you the immortality of your human nature. It would not help you very much to be shown the immortality of your spirit. The things in which you are interested

are human things. Heaven is a place where humanity is triumphant. It may be that you have not had any special interest in heaven. You have thought of it, perhaps, as lacking in anything of a human interest. But Jesus has risen from the dead in His human Body of flesh and bones, and humanity is triumphant. Praise God for the resurrection of the flesh.

v

'The Lord is risen indeed and appeared unto Simon.' He has given to you also a personal, human, present relationship. He is risen for you and reigns in you. You are to be interested not only in what Jesus did, but what Jesus *is doing now*. He is continuing His work of love in you. You must realize His presence in you, His work in you, His love in you. You must experience a real, personal love of Him that makes you long to see Him in the flesh.

'O glorious Conqueror, make me to share in Thy Passion so that I may also share in Thy Resurrection. May I die to self that Thou mayest live in me. So shall I love Thee for ever and ever.'

vi

The Resurrection means that life is continuous, unending. The centre of reality is the human nature of Jesus Christ, risen, glorified, full of power. His human nature is without end. There is no break in the human nature

of our Lord. It is the channel of His grace flowing from His sacred humanity to your humanity. In that humanity is power, 'the power of an endless life.'

Jesus does not mock your troubled life by coming to earth, living a spotless life, and then discarding it as of no value. No! Life is the gift of God, and by His reassumption of His human nature Jesus has given it an endless glory and power. That power of an endless life is yours. He has won it for you. He has not so much given you an example of how to live, as given you the power to live as He lived. The risen humanity of our Lord is the source of all power and energy. That power flows to you through the Sacraments. It is real power, human power, endless power, the 'power of an endless life.'

Consider your life. Is it weak, powerless, wavering, discouraged, perplexed, tempted, doubting? Then hasten to the risen Jesus and receive all the power in the world. More power does not exist than what you may receive in your communion. But you must make yourself receptive, you must enlarge your heart so as to receive more. The measure of how much He can give you is the measure of your receptivity of soul. If you want more power, enlarge your heart so that He may give you more. There is no limit to what He offers. The limit is what you may contain.

Then take that power of an endless life. It is

the gift of God to you, the gift of Himself, the gift of eternal life. Give yourself to Him, and you will feel the throb of heaven in your soul, the beat of the Sacred Heart, the joy of heaven now, the everlasting love of Jesus.

'Let me know Thee, my risen Saviour, my strength; let me find Thee, the desire of my heart; let me love Thee, the life of my soul.'

XXVIII

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

Read S. Luke xxiv. 50–53.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

RAISE your heart to your ascended Lord and make an act of love to Him. 'O everlasting King, Who sittest at the right hand of the Father, draw me after Thee that my heart may ever be fixed where Thou art, my treasure and my glory ; for Thou art the God of my heart and my portion for ever.' Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and the *Hail Mary*.

1

Picture the scene. Jesus leads them out towards His beloved Bethany. He gives His final words of love, His last directions, His love. Then He lifts His hands in blessing. As He blesses them, He is parted from them and carried up into heaven. His last words and actions are a blessing. Ask Him to bless you too, using your own words.

See the disciples and the Mother of our Lord returning to Jerusalem. What a different re-

turn from that sad one on Good Friday ! On that day they returned crushed, dismayed, frightened. But now they are comforted. There is the pain of parting, but it is a different pain from that of Calvary. He has been with them forty days teaching them, telling them that the human relationship was just as real, nay more so, although so different. They know He will send a Comforter. They do not linger at Bethany. They return to Jerusalem with great joy. There is work before them, work for Jesus.

You, too, must go to your work in the same spirit of joy. Jesus is not visible to you, but you know He is present in you. He has a work for you to do. Pause and refresh yourself in His strength and love.

II

Jesus was not removed from the Apostles, nor is He removed from you. The Ascension brought Him all the nearer to men. As Son of God He never left heaven. The Ascension means the entering into heaven of the Sacred Humanity. Humanity is assumed into heavenly places and is the permanent means of union between God and man. The Sacred Humanity is the channel of God's communication to you. The centre of Christianity is a Heart beating with love for you. Grace flows from God to you through the ascended Humanity. God is now using the Sacred Humanity

as a means of giving you His life. Give thanks to God for the grace which flows to you from the Humanity of Jesus.

III

What is our Lord's work in heaven? It is the continuance of His work on earth. 'He ever liveth to make intercession.' He is our intercessor. On earth He continually offered Himself to the Father, and in heaven He continues that sacrificial action. He is to-day the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the eternal Sacrifice, the Oblation without end. Wherever the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered there is Jesus offering Himself. In heaven He offers Himself visibly, on earth that Offering is veiled. But it is the same Victim offering Himself, a sacrifice for ever; not two sacrifices, but one and the same sacrifice. The action on earth is caught up into union with the eternal Offering in heaven. Give thanks for the eternal Sacrifice, the endless intercession of your great High Priest.

IV

Where He is, you must also ascend and reign with Him in glory. The centre of your interest is in heaven. You must 'seek those things which are above.' You must 'in heart and mind thither ascend and with Him continually dwell.' Heaven is no distant place. *You are in heaven now*, for your life is hid in your

ascended Lord. You are now living the heavenly life. Your conversation is now in heaven. Your life must display the characteristics of the heavenly life. Do you manifest the peace and the purity and the love and eternal sacrifice of the heavenly places? Is your home a glimpse of heaven? Are the kingdoms of the world becoming, through you, the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ?

Our Lord works in and through you. He sees with your eyes, speaks through your words, walks on your feet, uses your hands. Are your eyes shining with purity, are your words saturated with His love, are your feet shod with the gospel of His peace, are your hands marked with His sacrifice?

If you realize your union with your ascended Lord, your concern will be not only to avoid occasions of sin, but you will strive to become a less unworthy instrument of His love. Again it must be insisted that you are not to imitate Him. You are to give yourself so completely to His will that He may walk in you, minister in you, speak in you, love in you. You are to be *alter Christus*, another Christ. Give yourself to God that He may give Himself to you and through you bring all men to the knowledge and love of our Saviour.

V

'He ever liveth to make intercession.' Consider the vocation to the priesthood. What is

the work of a priest? It is to offer sacrifices, to forgive sins, and to bless; to share the sacrificial life of our Lord; to make intercession by the offering of the Holy Sacrifice. A priest is one who enters into the priestly life of our Lord.

So often is this ideal of the priesthood forgotten. In making choice of a man for a cure of souls, all manner of alien questions are asked: 'Is he a good preacher? Is he "a good mixer"? Is he a good financier? Does he come of a good family? Has he a university degree? Is he a good organizer?' These are important matters, but the supreme question is: 'Is he a good priest? Is he faithful in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice? Does he love souls?' A priest is to offer sacrifices, to forgive sins, and to bless the people of God.

The hardships of the priesthood are many and great, but they are not those which people usually imagine. The sacrifices of being a priest are those same things which hurt our Lord—the isolation, the misunderstanding, the slowness of belief, the hardness of heart. If you think you are called of God to the priesthood, ponder these sacrifices. Pray for all priests.

VI

The fields are white with the harvest. 'Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.' One other matter about vocation. Do not spend much

time considering whether you are worthy or not. *Of course* you are not worthy. You never will be worthy. But God does not choose the fit ; He fits whom He chooses. If you are called of God to be a priest, He will give you holiness of life just in so far as you give yourself to Him. Holiness of life in a priest, as in a layman, is not of human making. All holiness is a sharing in the holiness of Christ. Holiness, like all other virtues, is an infused virtue. You will be holy and worthy just in so far as you desire our Lord. How much do you want Christ ?

XXIX

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Read Acts ii. 1–11.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

THINK of the presence of God in you. Say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and the Collect for Pentecost.

'God, Who didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.'

1

Picture the scene. See the Twelve and others, with Mary in their midst, gathered together in prayer. Perhaps it was in the same upper room in which the Last Supper had been celebrated. They are obeying our Lord's com-

mand to wait for the gift which He had promised them. Hear the sound of the sudden, mighty wind. See the cloven tongues like as of flame which sit upon each of them. Hearken to their newly-found speech. What does it all mean? It is the gift of God the Holy Spirit, the Birthday of the Church, the extension of the kingdom of God. Praise God for His gift of Himself.

Consider that the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world is the logical outcome of the meaning of the ever-blessed Trinity. What is the truth of the Three in One and the One in Three? God is fellowship and wills fellowship. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are an eternal fellowship.

But God is not satisfied with fellowship in Himself. He wills fellowship with you. So He became incarnate and walked this earth, holding fellowship with the sons of men. But God did not desire to be in fellowship with the Apostles only. He wills to share your life. So He founded His Church as an extension of His Incarnation. The Blessed Sacrament is sometimes spoken of as 'the extension of the Incarnation.' But it is truer to say that the Church is His mystical Body extended to the present day. The Church is the mystical Body of Christ. S. Paul loved to describe the Church as 'the Body of Christ,' when he said, 'Now ye are the Body of Christ' and 'the Church which is His Body,' and many other such expressions.

Our Lord is in heaven, but what can be said of His physical Body in heaven can also be said of His mystical Body on earth. The Church is not an organization in which our Lord moves; *the Church is our Lord.* 'All power is given unto Me. . . . Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations.' And again He says, 'As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.' Whatever power is given to our Lord, is also given to His Body the Church. Give thanks for the Church, the Body of Christ.

II

You see, then, the meaning of the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is the Birthday of the mystical Body of Christ, the Holy Catholic Church. With the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Body of our Lord enters on a new sphere of action and is extended to you. Be it again said that you are not to be interested in what Jesus *did* in His physical Body as much as you are to be concerned about what Jesus *does* in His mystical Body the Church. There must continue a direct action of our Lord on the lives of men to-day, or else the story of Jesus Christ has less and less power to help men as it recedes into the past. Our Lord must have a present means of contact with you or there is little meaning to His life. Why should He have become incarnate at all, if He cannot touch you now?

The Church, then, is the present manifesta-

tion of the presence of Christ in the world to-day. The Body of Christ is the organism of which the life is the Holy Spirit. The action of the Church is the action of our Lord. Just as in His physical days on earth He commanded Baptism and Holy Communion and the other Sacraments, so to-day in His mystical days on earth He continues to command His Church. Give thanks to the Holy Spirit for His work in taking of the things of Jesus and showing them to you to-day. Say the *Gloria Patri.*

III

The presence of our Lord in His mystical Body, the Holy Catholic Church, is the fulfilment of His promise, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,' and that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail.' The Holy Ghost was given to the Church for ever, not just to the primitive Church or the pre-Reformation Church.

Men of all times have defied that presence of Christ, from the first century until now. The power of the Holy Spirit in presenting Jesus to you is not an irresistible power. You must give your will to be guided into all truth. God's will is knowable. It has been revealed in times past, and it will be revealed to you if you will offer yourself to God. It is hard to know the will of God, but it can be known if you will seek it. Offer your will to God. Ask for the guidance of the Holy Ghost in any

matter that is perplexing you. Say the *Veni Creator*.

IV

God is pure activity. Love must act. Your meditations must lead you to a life of action, to an energized life, to improved conduct, to a change of heart and will. You must seek God's will more persistently. It is not easy to know the will of God. So often you think you are doing His will when you are only yielding to a suppressed desire of your own. You think you are seeking God when you are only seeking yourself. You make your own plans and then ascribe them to God. Seek God, not yourself. Self-seeking is the cause of much spiritual failure.

How do you know God's will? Test it by what else you know of His will, by what has already been revealed, by how it fits in with the teaching of the Church which is our Lord's. Seek to know and then act. Action is the end of life, for God is action; God is fellowship, and wills action in fellowship. What improvement is there in your life? A tree is known by its fruits; and the fruits of the Christian religion—love, joy, peace—are fruits which can be judged. Examine your life. Is it a Christ-life? Is Jesus manifested in you?

The life of our Lord's Body was from within. The life of our Lord's Body—the Church—is from within. Christ has gathered all human nature to Himself in the Incarnation, and in the

Church He works upon humanity. The dogmas of the Church are not clever inventions of intriguing theologians imposed on an unwilling Church from without. The dogmas of the Church spring up within the Body. They express the Mind of Christ in His mystical Body. You can trust the truths of the Church, for they express the Mind of Christ working through your mind and the minds and hearts of all men. Make an act of faith.

V

This is the work of God the Holy Spirit, to take the things of Jesus and show them unto you. Through the Body of Christ, the Catholic Church, life is offered to you. It is a secret work, the work of God the Holy Ghost. His work is manifest in the lives of the saints of God. Some have thought there is a strange lack of devotion in the Church to the Holy Spirit. There is no such lack. Devotion to the saints of God is devotion to God the Holy Spirit, for in them He lives and moves and acts. God will live in you if you will let Him. Then give yourself to God, to work in you and through you. The kingdom of God is within *you*.

'O eternal King, let Thy kingdom come within me, the everlasting kingdom which Thou hast prepared for those that love Thee. Take of the things of Jesus and reveal them in me.'

XXX

THE EVERLASTING LOVE

Read S. John xv. 5–17, and Revelation i. 10–17.

✠ *In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*

LIFT up your heart to your risen Lord. When you have put out of your mind all thoughts save of Him, say the *Veni Creator*, the *Our Father*, and the *Hail Mary*. Make an act of desire for Him to dwell in you more completely.

'O good Jesu, my hope and my refuge, I salute and honour Thy sweet wounds. Plunge me in them, hide me in them, print them on my heart, that I may be on fire with love, and Thou shalt live in me and I in Thee.'

1

Picture to yourself the Lord of love as He reigns in heaven. See Him, glorious in power, radiant with love, clothed in the garment of peace, His eyes burning with desire for you. 'And His voice was as the sound of many

waters' ; His face 'as the sun shining in its strength.' When you see the vision of the love of God for you, you fall at His feet as one dead. But He lays His right hand upon you, raises you up, and speaks to you. Of what does He speak ? He desires to tell you of His love for you. Give thanks to our Lord for His great love wherewith He has loved you.

'Hail sweet Jesu, Who hast died for me. How can I thank Thee for Thy great love ? Accept my little love and make it great in the fiery furnace of Thy burning, fiery heart.'

II

Consider the love of God. What is love ?

Love is not a warm feeling or a physical passion or a sentimental debauch. Love is God. God is Love. Love is so very far beyond your feeble comprehension that it can only be described as God. You may indeed have experienced some spark of the love of God. For that love from the Sacred Heart you have been grateful. But consider that what you have known of the love of God is but the smallest spark from the furnace of the Sacred Heart. Ask to be given more of that love of God, that love which is God.

'Refresh me with the wine of Thy love, O Thou Beloved of my soul, Thou Who art so much more to be loved. Unite me inwardly to Thee and change me wholly into Thee. Draw me, I will run after Thee.'

III

Love is God and the gift of God. Love is God ; love is God's to give, yours to receive. You cannot achieve love of your own efforts. To try to gain love yourself would be only to add to your own self-will and self-conceit. You cannot get love by your own labours. Love is God and the gift of God. Love is His to give you.

Love is the gift of God, an imparted virtue. The seed of love was implanted in your soul when, at your baptism, you were grafted into the mystical Body of Christ. At that time the channel was opened for God to pour His love into your soul as you are able to receive it. His love was strengthened in you at your confirmation. Love is given you in each of your communions. If you are in a state of grace, love passes from God to you. In your last communion you received God's love. More does not exist than what He offered you.

What have you done with the love of God ? Have you nourished it in closer union with Him, has love been shown forth in your life, in your conduct ? Or have you refused the love of God ? The only way of judging is by examining your conduct. Ask God to give you more of His love and assure Him that you will use it to His glory.

' I will follow Thee, O Lord, not in the way of comfort and self-pleasing but by the way of

true and pure love. I desire Thee alone. Thee only do I long for, Thee only do I desire. Nothing else but Thee alone can ever satisfy me. Make me perfect in love as Thou art perfect.'

IV

Love is God and God is Life. Therefore love is a living thing. If God gives love to you, it should grow and develop. When love is given you in Holy Communion you should be more alive than ever. There is no true life but in God and in His love. When you receive the love of God in Penance, you should be more forgiven than ever. If you receive the love of God in Holy Matrimony, that love should ever grow and increase. If you have not killed the love of God in your soul by mortal sin, a thousand years from hence you should be more married than ever. If you receive the love of God in Holy Order, a million years from now you should be more of a priest than ever.

Love is life and ever grows in you. Love cannot help but grow if it is life. Your humility should be deeper with each Communion, your submissiveness quicker, your purity more fiery. Are you cultivating the gift of the love of God? Or are you killing it by hatred and self-will and meanness and ingratitude? Examine yourself to see if the love of God is growing in you.

'Let me not seek to live in the hearts and

lives of men but in Thee, O Lover of my soul. Let me find no life apart from Thee, that the world may be crucified unto me and I unto the world.'

V

Love is God. And God perseveres in His love for you. His love declines to be thwarted by your self-will. When you refuse His love, God seeks new ways of winning you to His love, new means of overcoming your opposition to Him, devises new forms of allurement by which to attract you to His love. The love of God shrinks from no sacrifice by which He may win you. It was revealed to men of old in the Suffering Servant, to men of later day in the Love of Bethlehem and Calvary, to men of to-day in the work of the Holy Spirit in the mystical Body of Christ.

Do not think the mystery of the world is a mystery of evil. It is the mystery of good which should fascinate you. While you were a sinner Christ died for you. While you were stuffing yourself with husks God was calling to you. While you were deporting yourself among pigs and harlots, God was scanning the horizon. When God saw you arise, He ran to meet you. How often would He have gathered you unto Him and you would not? Give yourself to the love of God.

'Plead Thou my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me, and fight Thou against them that fight with me. Lay hold on shield

and buckler and save me. Say unto my soul, I am the Love that ever seeks thee.'

VI

Love is life. And life is not to be measured in mechanical terms. You cannot measure life in terms of yards and feet and inches. You are saved by the love of God, not by the proclamation of a law. It is understandable that when you saw a law and computed its penalties, you refused to obey. But it is inconceivable that you should realize the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and go unmoved on your own self-appointed way. On earth it is the life of love which will draw you to love. In purgatory it will not be the wrath of God which will punish you, but the unveiling of the love of God, of the realization of that life of love which you have scorned. And in heaven your life will be a life of love. Resolve to seek that life of love, which cannot be measured. The only measure of love is to love without measure.

'O Thou Love of God, true Life, when shall I happily find Thee? When shall I be inflamed with love of Thee? When wilt Thou absorb me wholly and unite me to Thyself so that all my life may be in Thee, and Thou in me?'

VII

Love is given to you in the Person of Jesus Christ Who loved you and gave Himself for you. You must give. A great love is a great

giving. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' God's gift of His love is marked by the sign of the Cross. Your love, if it is truly the love of God in you, must be marked with the same sign of sacrifice. Your life will never be a reflection of His life if you are trying to get rather than to give. Your marriage will be happy as it becomes a holy rivalry between partners as to which one gives the more. Friendships break down because they lack the spirit of sacrifice which marked the love of David and Jonathan. Most parishes are known for the spirit of self-display rather than that of sacred sacrifice.

Are you trying to give and give the love of God in you? Are you giving without any expectation of return? Love is not a *quid pro quo*. Our Lord never said, 'This have I done for thee, what doest thou for Me?' He simply loved you. Mary simply loved. What are you doing? Do you ever say, 'Look how much I do for others, and no one ever does anything for me. Must I be always giving?' *Yes, you must.*

VIII

Love is God. Love is the impulse to give the highest and best in you, the desire to give to others all that you have for their joy, not for time but for eternity. If you really love some one, you cannot bear to think of his going without while you have. You want to give all that another may be the richer. Love ever

gives. Love never seeks her own but always another's good. This is what God has done for you. 'God so loved . . . that He gave.' In His Life, Death, and Resurrection our Lord gave you His Heart—and not for time but for eternity. He showed you that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Are you so loving that you are giving the best in you? What have you done to-day to make another happy? What have you given of your time, of your interest, of your sympathy? What have you given to-day?

'O sacred and adorable Love, O God the Blessed Trinity, give me Thyself. O Holy Spirit, Love most sweet, Source of all love, inflame my will with most ardent love of Thee and to the Father and to the Son that neither in mind nor in act I may be separated from Thee, my Lord, my God, for Thou art the everliving Lord of love.'

APPENDIX

ON THE PRAYER OF SIMPLICITY

IN these meditations great emphasis has been placed on the part played by the will, and especially on the 'acts' of prayer. These acts are of very great importance in training your will to return quickly, easily, and lovingly to the object of your prayer, our Lord Jesus Christ. The value of your mental prayer lies not in the facility with which you can draw a mental picture of our Lord, nor in the ease with which you exercise your understanding in forming considerations about our Lord, but in the perseverance with which you raise your will to our Lord. A great holiness is a great willing. The spiritual life above all else is an active life, and your mental prayer, if it stresses the training of your will, is a powerful assistance to you as you labour to erect the kingdom of God in your soul.

If you have performed faithfully the acts indicated in these pages, sometimes using them as printed, sometimes recasting them in your own words, you will have learned their value. As you continue to make these acts of prayer, not only in your meditation, but in the street, in your home, and at your business, they will tend to rise more and more spontaneously in your heart as you persevere in contemplating the Lord of Love, the Saviour of your soul.

As you come to devote more time to these acts of prayer, your mental prayer will pass naturally from

formal meditation to what is called 'affective prayer.' It is so called because you are exercising your affections more than your considerations and arguments. In affective prayer the memory and understanding give place to acts of contrition and abandonment, of gratitude and thanksgiving, of love and praise. Deductions about truth give way to intuitional processes, and your prayer becomes more simplified. Less time is devoted to the intellect and more to the intuitions and affections.

As the simplification of your prayer increases, and as the acts of prayer themselves become less varied, you pass by degree from affective prayer to the 'Prayer of Simplicity' or the 'Prayer of Simple Regard.'

The Prayer of Simplicity differs only in degree from affective prayer. In it reasoning is replaced by intuition, and the acts and affections are formed simply. To restate the definition positively, in the Prayer of Simplicity you will experience a single thought or sentiment which constantly recurs. Other thoughts may arise, but one idea remains dominant. The Prayer of Simplicity is a slow succession of single glances at the same object.

It should not be thought that in the Prayer of Simplicity the intellect and the will remain inactive before one object. This form of prayer is often accompanied by other acts, though these are on a lower level of consciousness. Other acts come and go, but the mind and will, although conscious of these additional ideas, return constantly to the contemplation of the one object.

Perhaps analogies may assist in understanding the Prayer of Simplicity. Consider a mother watching over her child's cradle. She may think of her child lovingly for hours, although there are frequent interruptions. She regards the child without argument or reason, simply loving him, in and through the interrup-

tions. Again, an artist may stand before a masterpiece, not reasoning about it, but simply enjoying its loveliness. Through his regard occur other thoughts, but constantly his mind returns to its enjoyment of the picture. Again, two friends may enjoy their meeting, although the exchange of ideas may interrupt. But through all the talk they are dominated by the one great joy of their companionship. So, in the Prayer of Simplicity, a single idea persists, and, though interrupted from time to time, the mind ever returns to the one object of regard.

The Prayer of Simplicity, or Prayer of Simple Regard, takes as many forms as there are people who practise it. Sometimes it is simply an indefinable desire, an indescribable yearning, a reaching towards God. Again, it may be a profound rest in the knowledge of the love and presence of God, the realization that He knows you and your problems, that He understands and sympathizes and is helping you. Or it may take the form of a vision of the glory and majesty of God. Perhaps it is only an affectionate remembrance of God in which your soul feels a holy fervour and devotion to God, rather than reasoning about God. This is often called 'The Prayer of Loving Attention to God.' It is not a meditation about the presence of God, but an exercise of the presence of God. 'Lovingly intent upon God' is the way S. John of the Cross describes it.

Distractions occur in the Prayer of Simple Regard as in other forms of prayer, and elicit an effort of the will to repulse them. When this prayer is called the 'Prayer of Repose,' the reference is not to the absence of distractions, but to the lessening of the use of the reasoning faculties, and to repose in a single idea. Indeed one of the values of this prayer is its insistence on the

constant exercise of your will. In this, as in other forms of meditation, there is always action, and sometimes energetic action. The forms of distraction are mainly two : first, thoughts about one's daily activities, or ideas suggested by sounds and movements about you, and other definite temptations ; and secondly, weariness and aridity, doubts about the value of your prayer, fears of being slothful, desires to arise and engage in activity.

You cannot remind yourself too often, in fighting against distractions, that they do not come to you through your own deliberate fault. Remember, too, when you become aware of distractions and contend against them, that they are not hindrances to your union with God, but rather assistances in developing that union by the exercise of your will. Union with God is a union of your will with His will. The very fact that you are distressed and enter into struggle is a sign of the right direction of your will. God does not judge souls by their success or failure, but by what they want to do and try to do in spite of failure.

Often one does not know how to practise the Prayer of Simplicity until he has been instructed in it. But, again, it may be that you have been led to it already by the practice of the acts of prayer. If, for example, you have made thirty meditations on the Birth of our Lord, the picture and the considerations may not interest you especially. They remain in your memory about our Lord, and you embrace them easily and naturally. You pass immediately from the considerations about our Lord to our Lord Himself. You simply dwell on Jesus and His love for you. Such is the Prayer of Simplicity, the quiet dwelling on our Lord.

If you have little time for meditation, the practice of the Prayer of Simplicity is of great assistance. The

soul who makes a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, saying no vocal prayers, but simply looking at Jesus and enjoying the presence of Jesus, is practising this form of prayer. You may have used it in your thanksgiving after Mass. You were so full of love and thanksgiving to Him for His unspeakable gift that vocal prayers were impossible. You simply enjoyed Him Who came to tabernacle with you. You were practising the Prayer of Simplicity.

The will of God is all that matters. If you are led by the will of God to practise this form of prayer, if you are attracted to it and believe that through it you are led to give yourself more completely to Him, then use this form of prayer to penetrate more deeply into the innermost recesses of His most Sacred Heart. If you think that another form of prayer best leads you to union with God, you must use that. Let the will of God determine your prayer life as it must govern your active life. So shall you find the 'peace that passeth understanding.' For 'in His will is our peace.'

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